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# Representation of the Titanic in Children's Literature

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## Representation of the Titanic in Children's Literature

Students respond well to diverse history-based curricula, like evocative documentaries, engaging trade books, and illustrative primary sources. Teachers are expected to demonstrate students' growth using cognitive tasks required within Illinois Revised Social Science Standards and Common Core.

State and national education initiatives require students to engage in history-based inquiry through close readings of diverse sources and then demonstrate their understandings in text-based writing. I present my research on the various movies, trade books, and primary source collections available to elementary teachers that center on *Titanic*.

Teachers are expected to show students' growth. Demonstrations of growth can be more than content-specific because pre-tests and post-tests are redundant and ineffective for a variety of reasons. I encourage teachers to position students to show students' growth through revision of text-based writing, which align with the cognitive tasks associated with Illinois Revised Social Science Standards and Common Core. These tasks are directly associated with the research done on the *Titanic*. It compels students to consider and *reconsider* understandings developed from the close readings of diverse sources while refining and improving their historical argumentation. Through open coding and axial coding, readers will be able to see the results of the research from 30 trade books focused on the *Titanic*.

With implementation of new educational expectations, no specific texts are required so it is up to the discretion of the district, school, and teacher to choose. Textbooks have a long tradition and are a basis for many, yet trade books, primary sources, and documentaries have increased in prominence. Trade books are written at various grade levels so teachers can accommodate students of different abilities. Primary sources, which are free for classroom use, are engaging supplements to the trade books; they can be shortened and modified for accessibility by young, 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Documentaries can add illustrative archival images to the text-based curricula and unique angles for students to consider. Selecting quality curricular materials, though, is problematic. My suggestions are research based and align with expectations within Illinois Revised Social Science Standards and Common Core.

Whether an educator in the science, history, or English content areas or a primary/elementary classroom teacher, all areas could benefit from my research. Differing discoveries led me to explore deeply about the topic of the *Titanic*. The content analysis will show readers an insight on trade books targeted at the elementary reading level.

I target *Titanic* as a topic because it is under-developed as a curricular topic in comparison to various wars, historical figures, and eras.

## Relationship to Education and Research

The research analyzed is directly related to my education. Holding an Illinois teaching licensure for elementary and middle level language arts allows the chosen research to be directly related to my career field. Having student taught for the first duration of my placement in a Charleston, Illinois third grade classroom, I became intrigued with the students' fascination with the *Titanic*. I had not learned about the history of the *Titanic* in my education growing up, so I wanted to know more about this topic that had every student in the class excited to learn. I began my research my first semester of graduate school at Eastern as part of my thesis work. I worked with Dr. Bickford to apply for a grant through the CEPS Department to purchase the trade books necessary to complete my research. Upon retrieval of these books and in conjunction with the books checked out from Booth Library, my research was under way. I was prompted by Dr. Bickford to present what research I had compiled at the Fall 2017 ICSS Conference. I applied, was accepted, and then presented my research for the ICSS Conference at Harper College in mid-October. I will complete my thesis work in the next month and plan to use my data and results to inform my teaching practice. I will use the data to create unit(s) within my own classroom. Through student inquiry and interests the onset of this research was made possible.

### Annotated Bibliography

\*The following articles, books, and media were access through Booth Library to conduct the research at hand. Not all of the sources mentioned in the paper will appear in the annotated bibliography below.

Austin, H. M., & Thompson, K. (2015). *Examining the evidence: Seven strategies for teaching with primary sources*. North Mankato, MN: Maupin House Publishing, Inc. by Capstone Professional.

The information used from this book helped to inform my research about the best practices for teachers in regards to using primary source documents in their classroom. Students learn best by being active learners, using hands-on activities to drive their understanding. These tasks align directly with the Common Core State Standards. The researcher was able to read the evidence behind teaching with primary sources. This book was found through the search engine on Booth Library's internet page.

Bean, R. M., Zigmond, N., & Hartman, D. K. (1994). Adapted use of social studies textbooks in elementary classrooms. *Remedial & Special Education, 15*(4), 216-226.

This article defended my case that textbooks are unconventional to use as solely the only source of information in the classroom. My research indicates that trade books are beneficial to use in the classroom and Bean (1994) argues that textbooks offer little coverage and depth about topics, further backing my stance. The source is used in collaboration with other sources information.

Bickford, J. (2013). Examining historical (mis)representations of Christopher Columbus within children's literature. *Social Studies Research and Practice, 8*(2), 1-24.

Omission in any sort of research or informational text is something that readers need to be cognizant of. Bickford (2013) sheds light on what omission is and why it is important to be aware of its effect on a reader. This source was used as a supplement to one of the

findings/ themes that I found prevalent in trade books. The article backed my position and understandings of omission.

Bickford, J. H. & Badal, T. A. (2016). Trade books' historical representation of Eleanor Roosevelt, *First Lady of the World*. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 11(3), 1-18.

Connecting curricula from different content areas is essential to associate learning in many realms. Bickford and Badal (2016) iterate the need to have cross-curricular content while incorporating primary source documents, which can be accompanied in trade books. I used this source to extend my knowledge on the need for connecting primary sources with trade books and different subjects, all while still meeting the Common Core Standards. The source contributes to my research about the need for multiple modes of information for students to critically analyze.

Bickford, J. H., Schuette, L., & Rich, C. W. (2015). Examining the historical representation of the Holocaust within trade books. *Journal of International Social Studies*, 5(1), 4-50.

Much like the above article, this article contributed to the knowledge of using trade books to both teach historical information through the use of language arts. The sources allows teachers to see the connection and need between the two. Contributing to the knowledge base of using nonfiction texts in classrooms, this article lends deeper information on how to use trade books to analytically teach about events in history.

Camp, D. (2000). It takes two: Teaching with twin texts of fact and fiction. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(5), 400-408.

Using twin texts to teach in the classroom is high-level technique. Teachers can use one text that is historical fiction in English and one narrative non-fiction in social

studies/history to distinctively teach a topic. This article helped me to urge the use of trade books in the classroom. It contributes to my overall paper topic of trade books.

Chan, J. T. (1979). Trade books: Uses and benefits for content area teaching.

While textbooks are told from one point of view, trade books offer something unique. Varying viewpoints contribute to their interests and participation in class. This source was used to further discuss implications of using trade books as a supplement to classroom teaching to spark student interest. It is directly related to the project urging teachers to use supplemental materials in their lessons.

Chick, K. (2006). Gender balance in k-12 American history textbooks. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 1(3), 284-290.

Many researchers have analyzed the textbooks that we often see used in the classroom, but trade books are under analyzed. This article helped defend my point of view that trade books should be used in the classroom. It contributes to my overall knowledge of textbook analysis.

Clark, C. H., Avery, P. G., & Virgin, R. (2017). Uncovering the language of film. *Social Education*, 81(3), 162-165.

This article touched base on the benefits to using film within the classroom. There is a different message received from visual content in comparison to simply reading to then try and create your own imagery. This article was used in my research to discuss the different modes of content in which teachers can use besides textbooks. Supplemental material is essential. It contributes to my overall research topic because a lot of books are turning in to movies and vice versa.

Clark, R., Allard, J., & Mahoney, T. (2004). How much of the sky? Women in American high

school history textbooks from the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s. *Social Education*, 68(1), 57-62.

Similar to Chick (2006), there is a need for research in trade books. Teachers encourage students to read on their own and of topics that interest them. Often teachers do not take the time to really look at what students are reading. By using trade books in a specific manner in the classroom, students get the opportunity to analyze texts while also enjoying a different reading format than a textbook. The article assisted in the depth of knowledge regarding textbooks and their content. It was used to defend the notion that textbooks alone, should not be used in the classroom.

Cordato, A. J. (2012). The six lessons the world learned from the Titanic disaster. *Travel Law Quarterly*, 4(2), 162-164.

There are several theories as to why the Titanic sank. Cordato (2012) sheds light onto two of the major people on board the ship, Thomas Andrews and Bruce Ismay. By giving readers insight into some of the theories, I am not be biased in my writing. The article gives relevant information pertaining to theories and lessons that may have been understood or changed as a result of the sinking. It contributes to my research because it gives more information as to some of the key figures on the ship.

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2012). Close reading in elementary schools. *Reading Teacher*, 66(3), 179-188. doi:10.1002/TRTR.01117

Engagement and motivation are two huge components of lesson plans. If students are engaged in the lesson they are more likely to be motivated to work. This article discussed close reading tactics used in elementary level settings. The trade books analyzed are all targeted in the elementary grade range, which directly relates to my

research. The article allowed myself to read about other schools effectively using close reading.

Gordy, L. L., & Pritchard, A. M. (1995). Redirecting our voyage through history: A content analysis of social studies textbooks. *Urban Education, 30*(2), 195-218.

Textbooks typically are not a fun-read for students. While this article discusses the content analysis of a social studies trade book, the authors suggest that textbooks typically offer surface level knowledge on topics. Textbooks do not have the time nor space to delve deep into topics. I used this source to compile my knowledge on textbooks regarding the pros and cons. It was used in my research to discuss the negative implications of solely using textbooks.

Gregson, S. (2008). "Titanic" 'down under': Ideology, myth, and memorialization. *Social History, 33*(3), 268-283.

The Titanic is a topic of interest among a great population. This could be because of the theories that are associated with it. The ambiguity that lies within the history of the sinking ship captures many readers. Gregson (2008) lays out some of the common myths that are associated with the Titanic. I used this article in my research to shed light on some of those myths, that I too had believed at one point. It directly relates to the project because it discusses representation of the Titanic in history and why those phenomena may or may not be true.

Khanna, A. (1998). The "Titanic": The untold economic story. *Financial Analysts Journal, 54*(5), 16-17.

Khanna (1998) agrees with Gregson (2008) that the Titanic is a major interest to readers, namely students. When reading a book about a specific event in history, often you might



find omission present. Khanna (1998) talks about some of the untold stories of the Titanic. I used this source as a second opinion to display the intrigue behind the Titanic's sinking. The article relates to the interest of the research as a whole.

Levinson, M. H. (2012). A general semantics analysis of the RMS Titanic disaster. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 69(2), 143-156.

This article discusses specifics about the Titanic. It has backed research regarding some of the discrepancies of those cold April days at sea. I used this article to talk about some of the parts of the ship and events that occurred while on voyage. It relates to my research because it gives detailed information about historical significance of the Titanic.

Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. (2015). Why isn't that in the textbook?: Fiction, nonfiction, and historical thinking. In *Doing history: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

This article was full of information about the differences between textbooks and other sources. It discussed why some information is not found in textbooks and why other information may be skewed. I used the information in this text to indicate that students need to be reading other material besides just textbooks. In addition, students connect better with a story or information written in narrative form. This article relates to my research project because it allows readers to analytically think about a textbook.

Libresco, A. S. (2017). Past and present imperfect: Recent history and politics go to the movies. *Social Education*, 81(3), 148-153.

Students are faced with an ever-growing technology population. Using historical movies or film in the classroom gives them motivation to pay attention because it the mode of communication interests them. This article was used to encourage teachers to use film

within their classrooms so that students can analyze a different type of historical event. It relates to my research because it is another form of learning historical information besides through textbooks.

Lindquist, D. (2009). The coverage of the Holocaust in high school history textbooks. *Social Education, 73*(6), 298–304.

Like several other articles, this one also talks about the little depth of historical coverage in textbooks. Textbooks are not designed to have deep coverage. I used this article as an added citation to make my point that textbooks do not do justice with teaching about historical events. It relates to my research because it offers using other resources as supplements to teaching about history.

Matusevich, M. (2006). Strange bedfellows: Censorship and history textbooks. *Social Studies Research and Practice, 1*(3), 359-373.

This article talks a lot about censorship, or restriction of information, in history textbooks. I used it to talk about one of the negative things about textbooks and that is that they are typically written at one grade level. Classrooms are filled with a diverse population where students are below, at, or above grade level reading. Having to rely on a textbook that is written for one of those populations results in other students getting left behind. Trade books offer a variety of reading levels on the same given topic. The information from this article was used to defend my point of view that solely using textbooks is detrimental to student learning and growth.

Mayer, R. H. (2006). Learning to teach young people how to think historically: A case study of one student teacher's experience. *The Social Studies, 97*(2), 69-76.

This article discusses a very critical point that I think a lot of readers lose sight of and that is bias. When reading any sort of text, readers need to be aware that the author of that text is going to have some sort of bias; it is pretty much uncontrollable. I used this article to discuss why it was important for me to have done this research. In addition, students should understand the importance of being analytical readers. The article relates to my research because it gives a standpoint as to why I analyzed dozens of trade books to find representations.

McCall, A. (2010). Teaching powerful social studies ideas through literature circles. *Social Studies, 101*(4), 152-159.

Social studies often is not a topic of interest for students. But by using small groups, like literature circles, students are better able to stay engaged. By using trade books in literature circles, teachers can bring in fresh new information that will keep students wanting to learn. I used this article to assist in my statement that trade books can engage students' curiosity. It relates to my research because literature circles are typically taught through using trade books.

Mercurio, M. L. (1999). All aboard the *Titanic*: Character journals are just the tip of the iceberg. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 43*(3), 216-226.

Motivation is essential in seeing growth in learning among students. Having a purpose verbally discussed with students allows them to understand just what it is that they will be learning and what will be expected of them. I used this article to discuss giving purpose to help motivate students to read. It relates to my research because I talk heavily about using student interest to motivate reading.

Minor, A. (2018). Historical representation of Jackie Robinson within primary and intermediate

level trade books. *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies*, 79(1), p. 1-15.

While conducting my research I analyzed thirty different trade books. I was the only researcher involved in the process. Due to this, it is considered a limitation to my research study. Minor (2018) discusses similar research practices. I used this article to show that I am not the only researcher who has not had a second reviewer. It relates to my project because I note that I did have some limitations despite all of the information that I discovered.

Moss, B. (1991). Children's nonfiction trade books: A complement to content area texts.

*Reading Teacher*, 45(1), 26-32.

Differentiation is an essential component of any teaching instruction. This article talks about the need for using nonfiction trade books as a complement to the content curricular textbooks. It is used in my research to display some of the components of textbooks. Textbooks are assigned by the district to certain grade levels but are commonly written above their grade level, making it difficult to comprehend. By using trade books, teachers can differentiate lessons more easily leaving all students feeling success. This relates to my research because I discuss using trade books in the classroom, but also being aware of the different representations that occur throughout their writing.

Richardson, E. M. (2017). "Graphic novels are real books": Comparing graphic novels to traditional text novels. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 83(5), 24-31.

Graphic novels rose in popularity a few years back and are still used in the classrooms. Graphic novels were once thought of as a negative, resembling a comic book. Teachers are using graphic novels to gain student interest while still teaching about historical events. I used this article to encourage teachers to find out which type of books their

students like to read. It is relevant to my research because there can still be misrepresentations within graphic novels, especially if you are looking at the illustrations.

Roberts, S. L. (2014). A review of social studies textbook content analyses since 2002. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 9(3), 51-65.

Having textbooks that are written at one grade level is detrimental to student understanding and application. This article shows content analysis on textbooks since 2002. I used the information to talk about the negative impact textbooks make on students and their love for reading. It relates to my research because I use this article to impact my point that more trade books should be used, but they should first be analyzed by the teacher.

Schwebel, S. L. (2014). Historical fiction, the common core, and disciplinary habits of mind. *Social Education*, 78(1), 20-24.

Historical fiction reading is directly related to the Common Core. By using trade books, teachers can teach skills necessary to comprehend the content from the texts. Students will use a variety of reading strategies to comprehend a text. I used this article to discuss the different ways to use trade books and the benefits that they entail. This article relates to my research because it emphasizes using a critical mind to read texts, precisely what my research was.

Schuetz, L. (2018). Representations of ancient Egypt in trade books. *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies*, 79(1), 1-33.

Schuetz (2018) talks about the different representations that occur in trade books regarding ancient Egypt. When researching primary source documents, Schuetz (2018) used numerous as a term to distinguish data that resulted in five or more documents per

one trade book. I used this same approach when analyzing my trade books. It relates to my research because I needed to have a basis for why I chose the data coding questions that I did.

Shoulders, D., & Shoulders, M. (2011). *T is for Titanic: A Titanic alphabet*. Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear Press.

I found this trade book in the Ballenger Teacher Center and used it as part of my data pool. This book gathers a lot of information about the Titanic and displays it in an alphabetical format. I used it to encourage teachers to use this trade book to challenge the more advanced readers. I also suggested completing a close read with this text. This book relates to my research because it talks about many different aspects of the Titanic.

Wysocki, B. (2014). Focus on the Titanic. In Sutton, R. & Grabarek, D. (Ed.), *The common core in grades k-3 (73-77)*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

This book talks about common books that are used in the K-3 setting that are top rated for implementing the Common Core. The Titanic rated among the top nonfiction titles to be used. I used this book to reiterate my notion that the Titanic is an important topic to discuss and analyze. It relates to my research because it gives a plausible reason to complete the research that I did.

Yuliati, Suhartiningsih, & Hidayati. (2017). The development of pop-up story book for improving language ability. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 4(8), 3750-3755. doi: 10.18535/ijsshi/v4i8.09

Pop-up books are used for a variety of purposes. They improve language ability while intriguing students to keep reading. Reluctant readers are more willing to read books like this that require them to be active in their reading. I used this article to discuss the

importance of hands-on learning, namely in reading. It relates to my research because I incorporate several different types of trade books into my analysis.

## **Abstract**

Due to page limitations for this award I had to stop my research at 25 pages. I will complete and revise my thesis within the next month. There are two sections that are left out of this submission, *significance for researchers* and *limitations*. The information gleaned from this research study is not only important to teachers and students, but also for historical researchers. I discuss what type of representations that I found throughout my research in hope that other researchers could attest to my data driven statements. I include limitations so that readers understand that with research there is always some chance of error. I discuss the different limitations that existed and how they may have affected my research.



## **Introduction**

The sailing of the Titanic and its shocking demise intrigue readers to research more information. Written in young adult literature through various viewpoints, the Titanic's story has a natural inquiry base due to its uncertainty. Trade books in the elementary classroom are increasing in use due to the state and national initiatives encouragement in using diverse texts. By using these texts, teachers allow students to analyze the various representations given to the Titanic's history. In the subsequent sections, I review history-based curricula and historical significance of the Titanic. The methods of implementation are projected to inform teachers about the various selection of supplemental classroom resources.

## **Literature Review**

The goal of the College, Career, and Civic Life for Social Studies State Standards (2012) (C3, hereafter) framework is to get students ready for life beyond the required years of school, whether they be college bound or entering into the workforce. The C3 framework embodies college, career, and civic life throughout the teaching of social studies. It grants what social studies should look like in this day and age in the classroom. Within the social studies realm and C3 (2012) framework, students are being provided opportunities to learn actively about their citizenship. It also encourages students to inquire about topics and provide evidence-based arguments regarding their findings (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO, hereafter], 2012).

The Common Core State Standards aim at outlining what students should be able to do by the completion of each grade. The standards are clear goals and expectations that students will use their new knowledge and skills to successfully use in the English language arts and mathematics content areas. The goal is for students to be prepared and successful for college,

career, and life beyond the required school years. The standards are set up to provide students with real-world applications. With the implementation of the Common Core, informational texts are now increased within the teachings of English Language Arts teachers (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). With the increase, teachers incorporate engaging, thought-provoking, as well as age-appropriate, texts that target student interest. While textbooks have a long tradition and are a basis for most teachings (McMurrer, 2008), children's literature and informational texts have increased in prominence. Accompanied with textbooks, they can provide accurate information and they are written at various grade levels so teachers can accommodate students of very different abilities. Trade books can connect social studies and English Language Arts content areas, given the new requirements (Bickford, Schuette, & Rich, 2015; Sanchez, 1994; Weaver, 2013). The state and national initiatives are a starting point for teachers to target students to take part in close-reading from diverse perspectives. Identifying the purpose in reading for information is a critical lesson in improving motivation to read (Fisher & Frey, 2010; Mercurio, 1999; Sanchez, 1994; Weaver, 2013). Within the Common Core, no specific texts are required, so it is up to the discretion of the district, school, and teacher to choose.

Selecting quality curricular materials is problematic. Research has been conducted to assess historical accuracy among textbooks, but there is little information regarding the assessment of children's trade books (Chick, 2006; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Lindquist, 2009; Loewen, 2007; Matusевич, 2006). Furthermore, finding information regarding the topic of the sinking of the *Titanic* is difficult. At the time of this writing, there appears to be no content analysis research on how the *Titanic* is historically represented within history-based curricula. I will examine the historical representations of the *Titanic* within children's (3-5<sup>th</sup>

grade) and young adult (6-8<sup>th</sup> grade) literature. I will explore misrepresentations within these trade books in order to help develop a thematic unit centering on the topic that could be used for both elementary and middle school. The lack of available curricular materials and the uneven historicity—or, historical accuracy and representation—justifies my intent. Given that the Common Core requires students in this grade range to analyze several texts on the same topic, the research done here can be put to direct use.

### **History-Based Curricula**

The teaching of the Titanic can be done through documentary, film, and videos. With the use of technology increasing within the younger generation, it makes sense to use what interests them amidst our teachings in the classroom. Students may be more likely to attain and retain their history from the movies that they see. Therefore, giving assignments that require students to critically analyze movies they see about historical and current events just makes sense (Libresco, 2017). In addition, a close-reading of a film can be done to gain insight into a historical event. While stimulating student interest and reinforcing content, films allow students to close-read through analyzing how, for example, sound and light create emotional responses as opposed to deciding the claims that an author makes in a written text (Clark, Avery, & Virgin, 2017). Interpretation of visual information has been an emphasis of the Common Core, and with sight being a dominant sense, students need to become more visually literate (Austin, & Thompson, 2015; Libresco, 2017). The Titanic has a number of available cinematic options.

One such documentary, *Titanic's Final Mystery* (Levy, 2011), describes the event as an act of nature. Researcher and historian Tim Malton proposed the notion that the Titanic sunk because of the atmospheric conditions that night. Malton stated that a cold water mirage created optical illusions which made it nearly impossible to see the iceberg in the ship's way of passage.

The History Channel's Titanic documentary produced by Bacon (2016) focuses on the splitting of the ship in two pieces, theories behind of the rivets, and artifacts found beneath the surface. *Titanic: Death of a dream* produced by M. Peltier (1994) has survivor accounts of that night. Viewers get a real sense of what life was like during that time in history. This documentary can be used to give a face and voice to a survivor for students. Since history is in the past, some students find it challenging to put into perspective events that occurred. Documentaries, like the ones mentioned above, expose students to a variety of viewpoints while immersing themselves into the content.

A film cannot merely compel historical thinking by themselves within the expectations of the Common Core and C3 (2012) Framework. A film would be a historical comprehension of one movie maker's perspective. The film also cannot be substituted for the disciplinary literacy (close-reads and text-based writing) expected within the Common Core. Textbooks offer the possibility of providing information to supplement films.

Textbooks are common but problematic. Textbooks change every so often to include the newest election, environment crises, and military conflicts (Moss, 1991; Schwebel, 2014). The practice of changing textbooks' language, graphics, and sentence structure is a traditional process of all textbook companies. Textbooks are focused on coverage, not depth, so content is generally concise and limited in detail (Bean, Zigmond, & Hartman, 1994; Gordy & Pritchard, 1995; Schwebel, 2014). Books, on the other hand, circulate through classrooms for decades and remain untouched (Schwebel, 2014). Coupling these books with other books and documents give students a chance to use their historical thinking to criticize the texts. Even one great textbook, which has but a single narrative, does not fulfill the requirements of the Common Core to incorporate multiple texts that represent divergent perspectives. Students find textbooks dry and

boring (Bean, Zigmond, & Hartman, 1994; Gordy & Pritchard, 1995; Moss, 1991; Ruswick, 2015; Schwebel, 2014), in addition to problems that come from being written at one grade level (Matusevich, 2006; Roberts, 2014) or written above the grade level for which they were intended (Moss, 1991). With a classroom made up of diverse learners, an adopted textbook alone will not be sufficient. Students thinking like historians read with attention to context by using detecting, comparing, synthesizing, critiquing, and making and supporting argumentative techniques (Schwebel, 2014). In order for this to occur, teachers cannot rely on textbooks to give the students accurate, in-depth information. Primary sources supplemented with a textbook or a documentary allow students to think like detectives by analyzing clues, sifting through evidence, and drawing conclusions (Schwebel, 2014).

Analyzing primary source documents transitions students from a concrete form of thinking to a more inferential and questioning technique. In teaching with primary sources, students determine the purpose and audience that the document is geared towards. This is important, because all documents have a writer's perspective, which can be biased: "History students need to understand that all text is authored text, and that critical readers learn how writers' positions influence their writing" (Mayer, 2006, p. 73). For example, primary source documents may be within a newspaper, but the message may be skewed given the stance of the authors who write for the newspaper company. These resources are free for use in the classroom and constitute novel, diverse, and sometimes opposing perspectives (Bickford & Badal, 2016), encouraging and challenging students to critique the source itself, as well as a variety of sources. As students decipher their way through primary sources, they become detectives in discovering history. As research goes, students learn and remember best by discovering for themselves and using hands-on problem solving, not by being told something (Austin & Thompson, 2015).

Furthermore, photographs, voices, paraphernalia, etc. touch people in a way that virtually nothing else can. The personal nature of primary documents contrasts with what is found in textbooks (Mayer, 2006). Students need something that is going to tie all of the primary source documents together, and textbooks are not the answer because of their limited use in such diverse classrooms. Trade books, implemented correctly by teachers, have the capacity to connect to different curricula and ability to abridge complex historical topics (Bickford & Badal, 2016). Their low cost and diverse reading level formats are especially favorable for both teachers and students.

Teachers engage students' imagination and curiosity by bringing fresh excitement into the classroom with trade books (Fisher & Frey, 2010; McCall, 2010; Mercurio, 1999; Sanchez, 1994). History is full of stories of all kinds. It is what connects the present with the past and allows us to make sense of how what happened before us impacts the world within which we live today. Teachers are responsible for deciding what stories to tell and what events to focus on. Trade books spark stimulating student participation in class discussions and offer an assortment of viewpoints to be contributed into any content area (Chan, 1979). With trade books, students get the chance to critically analyze historical events through different genres. They can piece together different versions of an event, person, or place. Students, according to the new education initiatives, are to describe a relationship between a series of historical events using language that pertains to sequence and cause and effect, be able to explain what happened during a historical event and why, and analyze how a key event is elaborated in a text and how individuals/events influence events/individuals (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA & CCSSO], 2010). Teachers can more readily differentiate instruction by incorporating nonfiction trade books (Moss, 1991).

Students, at times, place what they read through narrative as more powerful than textbooks or primary documents (Levstik & Barton, 2015), so it is important for teachers to position students to discover what is included and omitted from the history-based books they select. The selection of trade books are important because unlike textbooks, trade books are published every year with more current content, in addition to being readily accessible to teachers through libraries and other sources (Morris, 1991).

Historical accuracy and representation are the premise for social studies courses. Teachers delve into the what, how, and why about history. It would be antithetical for teachers to use historically inaccurate or misrepresentative content. Many educators, though, are unaware that even non-fiction trade books can be full of gaps, inaccuracies, omissions, and misrepresentations. For instance, Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on the Montgomery bus became the onset of the civil rights movement. Parks became the mother of the civil rights movement, but what about Claudette Colvin who participated in similar events prior to the December, 1955 event? Escapee from slavery, Harriet Tubman as conductor of the Underground Railroad although accurate, is not representative of a typical female slave. These are specific examples of omission, a historical misrepresentation. Other examples of historical misrepresentation include presentism and heroification. Presentism is where the reader views themselves through a narrative given their own experiences (Bickford & Rich, 2014). Readers of the elementary trade books at hand are likely to assume that a majority of the survivors were brave and active in their survival tactics because the stories indicated a handful of heroic figures during and after the Titanic's sinking. A handful of these survivors were discussed in a heroic representation. Heroification, a historical representation, attributes a disproportionate amount of heroism to a figure in history as only having positive (or overly positive) characteristics

(Bickford & Rich, 2014; Sakowicz, 2016). Heroification emerged when historical figures were discussed in their selflessness during the survival mode of passengers. More research needs to be done, however. No one has examined how history-based books represent the Titanic, which is a significant event in American history.

### **The Historical Significance of the Titanic**

The world's largest moving ship of its time, the Titanic, sank on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, taking over 1,500 lives with it beneath the surface of the ocean in April of 1912. The ship received ice warnings, some of which reached Captain Smith and others that did not (Levinson, 2012). Aboard the luxury liner there were the wealthy and famous (Isidor and Ida Straus, John Jacob Astor IV, Benjamin Guggenheim) in addition to hundreds of immigrants sailing to find a new life in America. The sinking of the Titanic is certainly a topic of interest to emerging adults (Gregson, 2008; Khanna, 1998). It can be said to have been one of history's greatest tragedies. With Robert Ballard's recent discoveries of artifacts below the ocean's surface, the intensity of interest has only increased (Rasor, 2001; Wysocki, 2014). Ballard contributes the curiosity in students to the "stuff of legend—heroes, villains, and above all adventure" in addition to the idea that "Everyone can relate to someone's story on the ship" (Wysocki, 2014, p. 73).

The *unsinkable* phenomenon can be categorized as the most widely accepted Titanic myth of all, as it was labeled unsinkable only *after* the tragedy occurred (Gregson, 2008). The sinking forever changed oceanic voyage. Although absent from most school's curriculum, the Titanic has developed into countless coffee-table books, documentaries and fictional films, archaeological discovery, and conspiracy theories (Gregson, 2008). Motivated by the discrepancies on how and why the Titanic sank and student interest in the historical event, I will



investigate how trade books represent the major people involved with the Titanic and its sinking in the North Atlantic Ocean.

There is much debate as to who or what is to blame for the sinking of the Titanic. One possibility is Captain E. J. Smith. Smith, seen as a “millionaire captain” (Denenberg, 2011, p. 9) surely had all it took to lead the luxury liner to New York City. His popularity allowed him to accumulate a salary twice as high as any other captain sailing in that day. His confidence gave him the edge that he needed. He did not foresee any condition impairing his ship sailing career. Unbeknownst to some, investigation into Smith’s previous voyage with *Olympic* found that Smith was responsible for the collision that occurred with *Hawke*. It was deemed that Smith had difficulty adjusting to the huge proportions and maneuvering problems (Denenberg, 2011). Some texts portray Smith as the sole person behind not slowing the ship down and ignoring the ice warnings. In other books it was said that he talked to Ismay regarding these two topics and Ismay simply pushed them aside. As captain of the ship, it was expected that Smith go down with the ship. Uttering the last words “Well, boys, do your best for the women and children, and look out for yourselves,” (Gregson, 2008, p. 274); Smith did just that. Some call this honorable while others view it as “sanitizing the suffering” (Gregson, 2008, p. 275).

J. Bruce Ismay, director of the White Star Line, accompanied the voyage on the Titanic, to be sure not to miss one of the most important voyages in history. He stayed in a deluxe suite and was dressed to the nines. It was said that the day of the sinking of the Titanic there was supposed to be a lifeboat drill, but Ismay made it clear to Smith that they were to land in New York a day ahead of schedule (Denenberg, 2011). By ignoring iceberg warnings, providing less than suitable number of lifeboats, and continuing fast speeds, Ismay is portrayed as having some fault for the sinking of the Titanic (Cordato, 2012; Denenberg, 2011; Shoulders & Shoulders,

2011). Many also claim Ismay to be a coward for getting on one of the last lifeboats (Denenberg, 2011). As a result he lived his remaining life very low-key, away from the public world.

Thomas Andrews, the Titanic designer, is shown as responsible for the fact that the great ship sunk to the ocean's floor. Due to design flaws such as the watertight compartments and rivets, the ship could not withstand the blow to the iceberg that night (Cordato, 2012; Levinson, 2014). During the voyage, Andrews was shown to be on task; he did not take time to bask in the many luxuries, but rather patrolled the ship (Denenberg, 2011). Just like Captain Smith, Andrews willingly went down with the ship that evening.

This is a brief synopsis of the major contributors and historical significance of the Titanic. Through trade books, authors deliver the representations or misrepresentations in age-appropriate ways for beginning readers and diverse audiences. No single trade book can carefully address every issue, just like no single textbook can. It is critical for teachers to understand what and why information is included, but also what and why information is left out. To learn from a balanced perspective and to allow for balanced literacy to be evident in a classroom, teachers should include several resources. My research will explore the areas of representation and misrepresentation in children and young adult literature in regard to why the Titanic sank.

### **Methods**

The books that I chose are based upon children's (grade 3-5<sup>th</sup> grade) literature. I chose 30 books consisting of eight fiction and 22 non-fiction. To produce an ample and inclusive data pool, I collected titles from the largest warehouses of children's literature, namely Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Booksource, and Scholastic. I located a long list of books that are representative of the intermediate level range. I located 30 randomly-selected books to

investigate patterns of representation; children's literature is designated as third through fifth grade (NGA & CCSSO, 2010). The books chosen encompassed a variety of viewing formats including, but not limited to, chapter books, graphic novels, and picture books. I looked at the Lexile level because teachers do not choose books based on students' age or grade level, rather their reading level. According to *The Common Core in Grades K-3: Top Nonfiction Titles* from School Library Journal and The Horn Book Magazine, history texts that focus on the Titanic are included on this list (Wysocki, 2015). A list of both fiction and nonfiction Titanic texts from grades K-3 is included. This relates directly back to the children's literature trade books that I analyzed. In addition, interest level was taken into account. Finally, only in-print trade books were analyzed because teachers would be unlikely be able to find or acquire a classroom set of out-of-print trade books, given their limited resources.

Both open coding and axial coding were used during my analysis. During open coding analysis, I made observations and noted patterns of content included and excluded. After completing the readings of the entire sample, I used my notes to construct a list of tentative, testable codes. During axial coding, I reexamined each book by rereading to determine the frequency and reliability of these codes. This reading considered *how* the content was included to determine if readers in the target range will likely understand details encoded by the author.

The general questions that I had prior to reading were: How is the socioeconomic status of passengers presented? How is the sinking represented? What is an accident or is someone/something to blame? What primary source documents are shown? What parts of the books seemed historically inaccurate or misleading/problematic? How were survivors represented? How were passengers presented? After I read the trade books, I realigned the

questions mentioned above and develop new questions. This became the open coding of the data sample. The axial coding questions are listed in Appendix A.

## **Findings**

Findings for the data are based upon 30 total children's books representative of grades ranging from third through fifth. Results are based upon a representative pool for children's book available in print format. The vast majority of the books were non-fiction ( $n = 22$ ; 73%) with a small portion being historical fiction ( $n = 8$ ; 27%). A few ( $n = 4$ ; 13%) had earned distinction through awards (Brown, 2008; Crosbie, 2007; Osborne, 1999; Spedden, 1994). Breaking down the nonfiction trade books into categories, results show that there are 11 in narrative format, nine expository, and two graphic novels. In addition, half of the trade books had numerous (five or more) primary source documents while the other half excluded primary source documents altogether, as has been done in previous research (Schuette, 2018). Included in the pool are data representative of children's literature. This section scrutinizes historical representations within the findings of 30 books.

## **Demography**

When exploring for demographic-based patterns in the pool of children's books, nothing remarkable appeared. The absence of a demonstrable pattern is in itself a pattern. The socio-economic status for laborers and leaders was omitted a majority of the time from text and/or illustrations ( $n = 27$ ; 90%). The two highest categories for socio-economic status for passengers were explicit in both illustration and text ( $n = 12$ ; 40%) and omitted ( $n = 6$ ; 20%). Stated differently, third class passengers lived separated by physical gates (either contextually or visually) from the rest of the passengers on board the ship in 20% of the trade books. Several

illustrations did, however, make it easy to depict first class versus third class by their dress, very common during this time in history.

In a similar concept, race was only explicitly evident in one text ( $n = 1$ ; 3%; Tarshis, 2010). A large majority ( $n = 26$ ; 87%) only included race in illustrations or photographs. Interestingly enough, the race that was depicted was only Caucasian. One text included a narrator of a darker-skinned complexion (Gunderson, 2012) while a second historical fiction story had the main character of darker complexion (Luper, 2017). As nearly all passengers and crew members were white, the lack of demographic patterns were not historically misrepresentative. Clear patterns emerged from other elements.

### **Before Sinking**

Given that the Titanic was traveling through an iceberg zone, results regarding would have been thought to be more substantial than what was found. Over a third of the texts omitted weather entirely. In addition, while a majority of the texts ( $n = 20$ ; 67%) talked about weather in some format—whether explicit and detailed or minimized or vague—none scrutinized the water mirage phenomenon. This appears to be an instance of omission, a historical misrepresentation.

Classification of people on board the Titanic were split up by passengers—poor, rich, or undetermined—and workers, either leaders or laborers. Mentioning between two and five of the different distinctions of people (before the sinking) in some capacity occurred 83% of the time. This information is important because although a majority of the books discussed all classes of people *before* the sinking occurred, this was not the case for the duration of the sinking. During the sinking and after the sinking mention of all groups dropped significantly. Through omission there can be speculations about what role unmentioned passengers and/or workers took during the sinking and aftermath.

## Sinking

The two clearest patterns appear to be in contradiction. A notable portion of books indicated that the Titanic did not have enough lifeboats in an explicit manner ( $n = 12$ ; 40%). The second highest stated that the Titanic had the required amount of boats (and actually more) in an explicit manner ( $n = 8$ ; 27%). What is interesting about the Titanic not having enough lifeboats is that most of the texts state that the Titanic did not have enough but did not explain in what capacity. It is true that the Titanic did not have enough to save everyone, *but* the ship did have enough lifeboats according to regulations of that time (Cordato, 2012). If this is not made explicit, misunderstandings emerge. The Titanic was not in violation of the law or engaging in illegal procedures.

Trade books largely disregarded Carpathia; she was not mentioned in 20% of the books ( $n = 6$ ; 20%). This is a significant factor because the ship, its captain, and passengers are the main reasons that so many people were able to sail to New York safely. Without Carpathia, the passengers may not have survived the cold waters and harsh weather for the next ship to arrive. In other words, survivors were not mentioned as living through being rescued by Carpathia in 20% of the trade books ( $n = 6$ ; 20%). Through the omission of Carpathia, readers were either left not knowing passenger survival status or that there was a ship that came to the rescue. On the other hand, over half of the books did mention Carpathia in an explicit or detailed manner and another 27% mentioned minimized or vaguely ( $n = 8$ ; 28%).

Not more than a third of the people on board the Titanic lived to tell their story. Interestingly enough, 60% of the texts mentioned survivors minimally/vaguely. As a result, readers—especially young readers bereft of a strong historical background—are left to assume

all survivors were indicative of the few exceptional ones. While the Titanic's sinking evoked public attention, explanations and repercussions of Titanic's sinking have maintained attention.

### **Explanations and Repercussions**

Half of the researched books had at least one theory if not two. This is significant because the theories have not been proven. There can be *strong cases* presented, but that does not necessarily make it important. Over half of the books did not have anyone to blame. While the tragedy of the Titanic does not need a specific person or people to blame, a majority left out blame in some format ( $n = 16$ ; 53%). The sinking can seem as though it was inevitable or ironic because it was said to be unsinkable according to the texts (Ballard, 1993; Brown, 2008; Crisp, 2007; Crosbie, 2007; Doeden, 2005; Donnelly, 1987; Driscoll, 2012; Dubowski, 2012; Goodman, 2016; Goodman, 2017; Gregory, 2017; Gunderson, 2012; Hughes, 1999; Jenkins, 2007; Loribiecki, 2012; Luper, 2017; Mlodinow, 2004; Odgers, 2008; Osborne, 1999; Osborne, 2002; Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011; Stewart, 2012, Stewart; 2013; Stone, 2015; Tarshis, 2010; Temple, 2008; Wishinsky, 2012) not research (Gregson, 2008). With the great majority of the books mentioning the Titanic as unsinkable, this may give readers a skewed idea that people were over confident. Since they thought the ship was unsinkable, then it made sense that they *did not have enough* lifeboats (Ballard, 1993; Benoit, 2011; Brown, 2008; Doeden, 2005; Donnelly, 1987; Driscoll, 2012; Dubowski, 2012; Goodman, 2016; Gregory, 2017; Gunderson, 2012; Loribiecki, 2012; Osborne, 1999; Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011; Spedden, 1994; Stewart, 2012; Stone, 2015; Tarshis, 2010).

### **Historical Misrepresentations and Inaccuracies**

Historical misrepresentations, like the presentism and heroification noted above, were noted in just over half of the sample texts ( $n = 16$ ; 53%). Of this new population, another half

stemmed from narrative nonfiction while the other half were historical fiction. The major misrepresentations that were present were noted through omission, presentism, and heroification. Omission occurs when information pertaining to historical precision of a topic is not included in the historical account (Bickford, 2013). Omission is noted in several aspects of the analysis—Carpathia, lifeboats, survivors, weather, race, socioeconomic status—given the open coding questions. Other notes were taken during reading when alarming information or lack of information arose. The sinking of the Titanic was a tragic event that was multifaceted. New laws were created as a result of the tragedy. Just one third of the books included the new laws ( $n = 10$ ; 33%; Donnelly, 1987; Driscoll, 2011; Dubowksi, 2012; Goodman, 2017; Hughes & Santini, 1999; Jenkins & Sanders; 2007; Osborne, 2002; Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011; Stewart, 2012; Stewart, 2013). Omitting the new change leaves readers unaware of changes that have transcribed from the event.

*Women and children first* was a command given to ship operators when loading the lifeboats. Eight of the total books did not mention women and children loading the lifeboats first ( $n = 8$ ; 27%; Crisp, 2008; Driscoll, 2012; Goodman, 2016; Gregory, 2017; Mlodinow & Costello, 2004; Odgers, 2008; Spedden, 1994; Stewart, 2012). A common misconception among young readers is that the first-class passengers were the main people who survived the sinking because they got to go into the lifeboats first. When the books omit that women and children were to load the lifeboats first, this socioeconomic status misconception occurs. In only two of the trade books ( $n = 2$ ; 7%), authors discuss in greater depth the loading of the lifeboats. Temple (2008) discusses the port versus starboard sides of the ship. Temple states that on the port side of the ship, the officer on duty allowed no men on the boat except crewmembers to command the boat. On the contrary, the starboard side officer allowed men on board if no



women and children were nearby. Jenkins and Sanders (2007) go further in to identifying these officers. Second Officer Lightoller was commanding the port side of the ship while First Officer Murdoch commanded the starboard side. By omitting this detail, students might not understand why many of the survivors were women and children.

Preservation of the past while taking a look at change in history over time is a critical way to view historical events. Readers should be able to read and try to understand why things occurred in the past, but without putting their own excuses in to play. Reading history offers chances for learning from the past and changing our worldviews. Presentism, using current morals to interpret past figures, occurred in many of the texts. Readers are left to blame Captain Smith, Thomas Andrews, Bruce Ismay, or some combination for the reason the Titanic sank. Although unable to fully understand the nature of life at the time, readers can be skewed to blame any one person for the sinking. For example, Captain Smith received many iceberg warnings but chose to continue on in path of line. If readers do not receive additional context for Smith's choosing to stay in his path, they are likely to put a lot of blame on him.

Heroification emerged within the Titanic-based trade books. Unsinkable Molly Brown was one survivor mentioned in 12 of the trade books ( $n = 12$ ; 40%; Benoit, 2011; Brown, 2008; Crosbie, 2007; Doeden, 2005; Dubowski, 2012; Gunderson, 2012; Odgers, 2008; Osborne, 2002; Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011; Sanders, 2007; Stewart, 2012; Stewart, 2013). Her bravery and assertive personality put her at the forefront of survivor names. In addition, Isidor and Ida Straus were two other passenger names that were glorified for their selfless nature. The Straus couple—founder-of Macy's Department Store—went down with the ship (Benoit, 2011; Brown, 2008; Doeden, 2005; Luper, 2017; Osborne, 2012; Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011; Stewart, 2012; Stewart, 2013). Mrs. Straus refused to leave her husband behind. Many other passengers made a

similar choice, but were not mentioned in the trade books. Finally, the captain of the Carpathia, Arthur Rostron, was the figure positioned as a hero in regards to the survivors of the Titanic sinking. He commanded his ship and led its path to location of the Titanic. Very rarely did the trade books mention any of Rostron's counterparts or the passengers on board Carpathia—all of whom were a critical part in helping Titanic survivors. Rostron receives the glory for all of those whom were involved in the rescue.

Historical inaccuracies also occurred. Of the data sample, a majority of the books had discrepancy on how many survivors there were. Survivor names were taken while on board the Carpathia, however in the trade books survivor numbers ranged from 700-712. Next, the binoculars that were supposed to be in the lookout's nest were said to have been lost, misplaced, locked away, and even forgotten. Third, illustrations account for inaccurate information about the ship sinking in one or two pieces. Robert Ballard has proven through underwater study and research that the Titanic broke in two, however some trade books illustrate that the ship was one piece resting on the ocean's floor. A final inaccuracy deals with the watertight compartments. While there was no argument about the total 16 compartments, books differed in the amount that could be flooded before the Titanic would sink. Numbers ranged from two to six—making a difference in the amount of time it would take the ship to disappear from the ocean's surface. Inaccuracies skew a reader without supplemental support.

### **Discussion**

The above patterns were discernible and meaningful. Here, I explore their significance. Teachers and researchers will view the findings differently. Intermediate level teachers use a variety of texts and text levels given the wide range of interest and ability in the classroom. Sifting through several books on the same topic allows a teacher to be intentional with their

selection for a lesson implementation. Teachers should not shy away from only teaching or having access to the *really good books*, those that are historically accurate, because reading a single good book does not align to the standards. Allowing students to analyze several texts on the same topic is a complex skill needed to be practiced if not for the students to grow as researchers and learners, then because it is a necessary skill according to the cCSS. When you read a single book, you are reading to comprehend, a low level on Bloom's Taxonomy, but once you read multiple texts, you're comparing and contrasting, which is evaluation, which is a higher level of critical thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Benassi, Overson, & Hakala, 2014; Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956).

### **Significance for Teachers**

Teachers wanting to incorporate trade books into their content area teaching should be aware of misconceptions or misrepresentations that may arise. For the most part, the patterns were curious. Most of the books had qualities that a teacher would want, but they did not necessarily tell what about the books made them have stand-out, important moments. In several of the books in this study, I found misrepresentations that were important enough to be discussed in greater detail. *All Stations! Distress!* by Don Brown (2008) is very colorful and visually pleasing, yet that should not feel a reader as to believing everything that read inside the cover. Readers should go into books with a skeptical mind, wanting the text to prove their assertions with evidence. Brown's (2008) content, while interesting, is not always accurate. During one point in the story, the narrator states that God himself could not sink the ship. This is quite an assertion, bringing into to play religious beliefs, as if to challenge God stating he would be unable to sink the mighty Titanic. The illustrations in this text also lead a reader to believe that the ship sank into one complete piece. It was not until the very last page of the text is one

confronted with the idea that the ship sank in two. Charles Joughin was described as climbing off the back end of the ship where he neatly hopped off, hardly getting his hair wet. This imagery glorifies the tragic sinking, downplaying its horrific event. Finally, the third-class passengers, or steerage, were explicitly demoralized based upon just their class while on board the ship. “For no other reason than the stubborn notion that the poor shouldn’t mix with the rich, not even in the face of calamity, they had been kept below” (Brown, 2008, p. 37). I would be curious to hear students thoughts on this statement. While it might be true that the poor did not mix with the rich during that time in history, the way the sentence is worded comes off harsher than I think it had meant to. There was more than one reason that many more third-class passengers did not survive, but Brown’s text only stated the single theory. Other books are valued for distinct reasons.

While a portion of the texts did not mention Carpathia as being the ship to rescue Titanic survivors, a similar number discuss Californian’s role in history. Titanic had sent out distress signals and the Californian was within ten miles of the Titanic. Donnelly’s book *Titanic Lost...and Found* (1987) puts unrealistic blame on Californian. “One ship is not far away. Its name is the Californian. This ship is only ten miles away from the Titanic. It could reach the sinking ship in minutes and save everyone” (Donnelly, 1987, p. 22). Readers, especially at this cognitive age, might believe that it would really only take minutes for a ship to travel ten miles, essentially the same speed as car traveling on the highway. In reality, it would take more than several minutes and there still would be no guarantee of every passengers survival. Goodman’s *The Titanic for Kids* (2017) also explicitly stated that every passenger could have been saved had the unknown ship been contacted.

Blame is a hot topic of conversation among several of the texts. In many ways the books use binoculars as a blame outlet for why the Titanic hit the iceberg; missing binoculars in the crow's nest could have prevented the collision (Goodwin, 2006; Jenkin & Sanders, 2007). Another area is the Titanic not having enough lifeboats to save all of the passengers. This statement is true, but readers need to have background information on lifeboat regulation for that time in history. The Titanic actually had more than the required amount of lifeboats on the ship. Stewart's (2012) book, *Titanic* (National Geographic Kids), alluded at the fact that Titanic only had 20 lifeboats instead of 64 so that first class passengers had more room to stroll around. Again, this statement is not necessarily false, but it gives a bad implication. Finally, in *Remembering the Titanic* by Frieda Wishinsky (2012), a page explicitly mentions that Captain Smith, Bruce Ismay, and Thomas Andrews said the ship was unsinkable, a statement that never actually occurred.

When historical fiction trade books contain a mixture of fact and fiction in an appealing way, it allows readers to be more intrigued in their reading. While a majority of the books in this study were of the nonfiction format, there were still significant findings relevant to classroom teaching in the fiction books. Including a combination of different text types into lessons engages readers while allowing them to be analytical.

Books that play upon animals appeal to elementary student interest. Four texts had animals as their main character as part of the plot mover (Crew, 2005; Crisp, 2008; Mlodinow & Costello, 2004; Spedden, 2004). A notion of a good luck charm, a misleading factor, is associated with two of the historical fiction books (Crew, 2005; Crisp, 2008) encompassing animals. In *Pig on the Titanic* (2005), teachers should be leery of the content images associated with words in this book. Lifeboats were mentioned, but not how many. Words combined with

illustrations would lead readers to think that all passengers survived and were rescued by another ship. In the illustrations, one sees a few lifeboats heading towards a large ship (never mentioned as Carpathia) but with no sight of people or any items in floating directly in the water. As a reader, I am misled to think that the pig gave the main characters good luck on the Titanic to which allowed them to be survivors. The front page of the trade book in addition to the story plotline lend misconceptions. Right above the title of the book on the front page one can see the words “*a true story!*”, deceived that the events throughout the book happened exactly the way the story told. Through omission, whether intentional or not, readers are left to speculate on their own.

Speculation emerges in other forms as well. Two books discussed the Titanic and its adventures as some sort of curse (Luper, 2017; Tarshis, 2010). Contradiction can leave readers feeling confused on what it is the text is trying to persuade them to believe. In Luper’s *The Titanic Treasure* (2017), it states that women and children were to load the lifeboats first, but then goes on to say “first class only, of course. Servants and steerage will have to wait their turn” (p. 73). A common misconception among elementary level or novice learners among the Titanic crowd is that only first-class passengers were survivors from the disaster. Through research and survivor recordings, we know that women and children were ushered through first. While the first class was physically closer to the lifeboats, it was not the key reason so many first-class passengers survived in comparison to steerage. Survival takes on many different forms in these trade books.

Survival can sometimes be thought of as something one can determine or alter its course. In three of the historical fiction books, time travel was discussed in which one (if not more) of the main characters tries to go back in time to either warn passengers or attempt to save some

passengers (Goodman, 2016; Mlodinow & Costello, 2004; Osborne, 1999). Although Osborne's *Tonight on the Titanic* discusses time travel, it is part of the series Magic Tree House, which is very attractive to students. Using this text in conjunction with a nonfiction text could be an enticing factor to get students interested in learning about the Titanic.

Appealing to the senses can consume a reader to the text. In Crosbie's (2007) *Titanic the Ship of Dreams*, a reader is almost in visual overload. The shiny and reflective cover of the trade book sets it apart amongst its peers. The visual appeal of the text is what intrigues a reader at first. Upon opening the large book, the hands are incorporated into the reading process. The Pop-up book format is an interactive reading experience for even the most reluctant reader (Yuliati, Suhartiningsih, & Hidayati, 2017). Bored readers are sometimes placed with reluctant readers because teachers cannot always tell the difference in demeanor to distinguish the two. Luckily, bored students will also be active in their reading process through the change of reading Pop-up books. Touching images or physically manipulating pieces of the book will give a sense of being inside the story or maybe even a part of history (Yuliati, Suhartiningsih, & Hidayati, 2017). In addition to the aesthetic appeal, Crosbie (2007) adds in detail for the reader in a narrative nonfiction format. Numerous primary source documents, explicit information about the lifeboats, Carpathia, and survivors are just a few items that set this book ahead when compared to the others. *Titanic the Ship of Dreams* also earned the 2007 Parents' Choice Award, just one of the four books analyzed to receive distinction. Lastly, the text offers a deeper understanding of what was occurring during that time in history. Extra details were added in that allow for a reader to get context about why what happened and how it happened was significant. To further add to the concept of visual appeal, let us take a look at graphic novels.

Graphic novels have increased in their appeal in the elementary classrooms. The way the text is set-up is quite different from your typical text or book. Two of the texts analyzed were in a graphic novel format. *The Sinking of the Titanic* by Matt Doeden (2005) and *The Titanic Disaster* (2015) by Adam Stone offer readers a quick read of the Titanic. Since both of these trade books are a quick read, a lack of detail occurred. Teachers could use these books as a supplement to a more detailed text. Although the texts portrayed several minimized or vague results according to the open coding questions, which is not to say that they should be considered unnecessary texts. Graphic novels are real books that could be the motivating factor behind a child choosing to read and falling in love with the process and progress (Richardson, 2017), reason enough to include them in the classroom environment.

Reading through *Save the Titanic for Kids* (Goodman, 2016), a historical fiction text, I was left unwilling to read more books about the Titanic. The setup of the book, its content, and misleading title all led to my negative thoughts about the book. I thought the book would look super intriguing and have plenty of pictures or graphics to assist in student connection between words and images, but to my dismay nothing about this book was inviting or towards the *for Kids* population that it portrayed. The content of the book was dry and when I was finished reading I was left thinking that the Titanic sunk because there had not been binoculars in the lookout station. Furthermore, there were not enough lifeboats. There were not enough lifeboats because people thought the ship was unsinkable.

Sometimes trade books have an influx of information compiled into what would seem like a short, fun read. *The Science and Story of Titanic* (Hughes & Santani, 1999) and *T is for Titanic: A Titanic Alphabet* (Shoulders & Shoulders, 2011) are two texts that have a plethora of information, almost overwhelming to the average reader. To challenge some of the more



advanced readers, these texts are needed in the classroom. Teachers can take sections from the text to analyze as a close-read. Although *The Science and Story of Titanic* (1999) may be a bit of a challenge for some readers, it has good information:

When the Olympic launched three months before the Titanic, it was the largest ship in the world. In fact, the Olympic was launched with more fanfare and excitement than the Titanic. It was only after the terrible disaster of the Titanic's sinking that the Titanic surpassed the Olympic in the public's imagination. (p. 19)

While reading this portion of the text I was reminded of another misconception of the Titanic. The term *unsinkable* is often coined with the Titanic. Some people like to use the notion that the unsinkable Titanic is precisely what made the ship sink, as if it was some sort of destiny. Ironically, it was not until after the ship had sunk that White Star Line advertisements claimed her to be unsinkable (Gregson, 2008).

This topic can be the perfect combination for using a twin text approach. Half of the texts that had noted misrepresentations were historical fiction while the other half were narrative non-fiction. A Twin Text approach is used interdisciplinary when teaching two similar but distinct texts (Camp, 2000; Frye, Trathen & Wilson, 2009; Furtado & Johnson, 2010), one historical fiction in English and one narrative non-fiction in social studies/history. *Tonight on the Titanic* (Osborne, 1999) and *Titanic-Fact Tracker* (Osborne & Osborne, 2002) are great novels to read together in class. Teachers could read *Tonight on the Titanic* together as a whole group and use the fact tracker text as a supplement. Its quickly moving plot allows the readers to stay hooked while flowing easily through the story. The two trade books work together nicely, given the twin text approach.