

# Consider the Source!

Nonfiction text must be identified as a primary or secondary source to determine the reliability and accuracy of the information provided.

**Read the following examples to identify the type of source and explore its reliability.**

## Source A

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999, was a day I shall remember all my life. It was when I first set foot on the seventh grade hall. It was an exciting first day of a year that would prove to be full of possibility and surprise. I was eligible to play football in seventh grade, rather than managing equipment on the sidelines as I had done last year. Also, we heard the news that we would all receive our own full-length locker. Whew! No more shoving books and gear into a small hole in the wall! But, better still was that we could sit where we wanted in the cafeteria. It may sound small and meaningless, but to me and my group of friends, this meant that we were on the verge of adulthood. It meant mingling with the eighth graders and choosing our circles of friends.

## Source B

Cassie stepped across the cafeteria and carefully considered where to lay her tray. She was strategic in avoiding the people with whom she ate during sixth grade. Seventh grade girls were not going to help her be promoted from manager of the football equipment to a fully-gearred linebacker. She'd been training all summer, and all that she worried about was making the team and fitting her football pads into her newly-assigned full-length locker. As her eyes scanned the crowds of hungry students, she settled on the table with the eighth grade quarterback.

<b>Evaluating Sources</b>	<b>Source A</b>	<b>Source B</b>
Primary or Secondary? Explain.		
Is the source an expert?		
Is the information complete?		
What evidence is there of bias?		
What evidence is there of loaded words/ semantic slanting?		

# Joseph Bruce Ismay

(12 December 1862 – 17 October 1937) was an English businessman who served as Managing Director of the White Star Line of steamships. He traveled on and survived the maiden voyage of the RMS *Titanic*. Bruce Ismay is typically remembered as a coward who saved himself as other heroes went down with the ship. Others see him merely as a scapegoat who had some rather influential enemies.



**Read the accounts to gain perspective on J. Bruce Ismay's character. Be sure to consider the source in terms of bias, language, and credibility!**

1

Ismay was rescued in Collapsible Lifeboat C. Reports (resulting from his personal testimony) say that as the ship was in her final moments, Ismay turned away, unable to watch his creation sink beneath the waters of the North Atlantic. He was taken aboard the RMS *Carpathia* and arrived in New York on 18 April. Ismay later testified at *Titanic* disaster inquiry hearings held by both the U.S. Senate the following day, and the British Board of Trade a few weeks later.

2

"After being picked up by the *Carpathia*, Ismay was led to the cabin belonging to me, the ship's doctor, which he did not leave for the entire journey. He ate nothing solid, received only a single visitor, and was kept under the influence of opiates. He was very upset and, understandably, in a state of shock." ~Doctor of *Carpathia*

A passenger on the *Carpathia* said there was no wonder that none of the wireless telegrams addressed to Mr. Ismay were answered until the one that he sent yesterday afternoon to his line, the White Star.

"Mr. Ismay was beside himself," said this woman passenger, "and on most of the voyage after we had picked him up he was being quieted with opiates on orders of the ship's doctor."

3

After the disaster, Ismay was savaged by both the American and the British press for deserting the ship while women and children were still on board. Some papers called him "J. Brute Ismay" and suggested that the White Star flag be changed to a yellow liver. Some ran negative cartoons depicting him deserting the ship. He followed the "women and children first" principle, having assisted many woman and children himself. He and Carter boarded lifeboat C only after there were no more women and children near that lifeboat, and it was also the last lifeboat to leave *Titanic*. The objective of "women and children first" was to ensure that lifeboats were first filled with women and children, and that men could occupy any remaining places if available. It was not intended to prevent men from being saved altogether. London society ostracized him and labeled him one of the biggest cowards in history.

4

"Mr. Ismay reached the *Carpathia* in about the tenth life-boat," said an officer. "I didn't know who he was, but afterward heard the others of the crew discussing his desire to get something to eat the minute he put his foot on deck. The steward who waited on him, McGuire, from London, says Mr. Ismay came dashing into the dining room, and throwing himself in a chair, said: `Hurry, for God's sake, and get me something to eat; I'm starved. I don't care what it costs or what it is; bring it to me.'

"McGuire brought Mr. Ismay a load of stuff and when he had finished it, he handed McGuire a two dollar bill. `Your money is no good on this ship,' McGuire told him. `Take it,' insisted Mr. Ismay, shoving the bill in McGuire's hand. I am well able to afford it. I will see to it that the boys of the *Carpathia* are well rewarded for this night's work.' This promise started McGuire making inquiries as to the identity of the man he had waited on. Then we learned that he was Mr. Ismay. I did not see Mr. Ismay after the first few hours. He must have kept to his cabin."



## What should Ismay have done?

J. B. Ismay should have stayed aboard the sinking Titanic! After the Titanic collided with an iceberg at about 11:45, it did not take long for Captain John E. Smith to figure out there was not enough places for all the men, women and children in the lifeboats. So he gave the well known order, "Women and children first." Now, did the Captain mean that there were no men to be allowed in the lifeboats? NO! The lifeboats needed officers, and sailors to make sure they were operated safely, and correctly. It was the spirit of the order that counted, if you did not have a legitimate reason for getting in a lifeboat, you had no place in one. Did Ismay have a responsibility to stay with the Titanic till she sank beneath the waves, like the Captain did? When the Titanic was still on blueprints the planning of how many lifeboats the Titanic would carry came up. The Titanic's designer at the time Andrew Carlyle was pushing for 48 lifeboats which would have been enough for everyone one on board in case of a disaster. But there was one man standing in his way, Ismay! When the rubber met the road Ismay said no, for various reasons. But on the night of April 14, 1912, it became a different story. Because of his choice, it puts him under some obligation to stay aboard and take whatever comes.

Also consider that Ismay owned the White Star Line, which means he owned the Titanic. If a person owns something that is used for the public, and if fails in some way, and death follows, or injury, it seems that whoever owns it should take whatever other had to take as well. He was responsible for the passengers.

The other side to the argument is that J. B. Ismay claims that there were no women in sight, and there are no witnesses to back up the fact. If that is true, then why should he stay on a sinking ship and face certain death? And if there was no women sight was he really breaking a rule? Not exactly. And, perhaps he knew that his responsibilities on shore were great and needed his attention. Even if Ismay's intentions were of the basest nature, it would still be understandable.

Adapted from <http://titanicstation.blogspot.com/2007/08/j-bruce-ismay.html>

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