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Young Jim Mulholland can't believe his good luck: He has signed on as a cabin boy to the world's finest ocean liner, the Titanic, and can't wait for the history-making voyage across the sea to America. As part of his duties Jim is in charge of the ship's cat, a beautiful tortoiseshell that also appears happy to be on board. He calls the cat by the ship's construction number, 4-0-1, certain that she will bring him good luck. And he's delighted when 4-0-1 shortly gives birth to a litter of kittens. But once the ship's trial runs are completed and it's ready to launch to sea, Jim notices that 4-0-1 is nowhere to be found. He's got to find her--the Titanic can't cast off without her lucky cat. Jim is faced with a decision that will affect the rest of his life.

Titanicat Details

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Author : Marty Crisp , Robert Papp (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Titanicat for online ebook

Juli says

Since the sinking of the Titanic more than 100 years ago, tales of superstition, heroism and tragedy have surrounded that fateful maiden voyage. The story of the ship's cat and her litter of four kittens had a more happy ending, for the kitties and a superstitious young sailor. This tale is based on their story.

The illustrations in this children's book are just stunning! Such vibrant colors! A friend who knows I enjoy stories about the Titanic told me about this book. She bought it for her niece, and knew I would love the story and beautiful pictures inside. I checked it out from my local library's digital site. So glad I did! The story is short and sweet...perfect for a primary grade student.

Jim Mulholland signs on to be a cabin boy aboard the Titanic. Among his jobs is caring for the ship's cat, a beautiful calico. He discovers the cat has four tiny kittens as well. He keeps track of them until the ship reaches Southampton. One day he can't find the cat...then he spies her going down the gang plank carrying a kitten in her mouth. Jim finds one kitten left, and grabs it. He's forced to jump off the ship to reunite it with its family. The ship sails off without him. At first he is angry with the cat for making him miss the voyage to America, but he is grateful days later when he learns that the ship sank with great loss of life. The beautiful, former ship cat, saved his life, and the lives of her kittens.

The book is 38 pages long with many color illustrations throughout. Perfect length for young readers, or for reading out loud to them. There is no description of the sinking or deaths...the main characters are off the ship before the disaster. The attention is focused on the cats and the boy, with only a mention that they avoided the accident by leaving the ship early. So, it isn't too morbid for kids. The story is great, but the illustrations really make the book special. Robert Papp's drawings are wonderful!

Marty Crisp has written several children's books including a related one, *White Star: A Dog on the Titanic*. Robert Papp has illustrated several books and wrote one himself, *Spooktacular Special*.

Melki says

This was kind of a melancholic read, to say the least. I'm not sure what else you could call a book about a doomed ship, and her doomed passengers.

Here we meet young Jim, a cabin boy off on his first seafaring adventure to America aboard the unsinkable ship known as the Titanic. He's been put in charge of the ship's cat - a lovely calico "named" after the ship's number - 4-0-1. After scouring the gigantic ship, Jim finally finds the cat with her four kittens. Great, I thought. Now I get to watch a boy and *five* cats drown. But, (view spoiler)

Robert Papp's artwork is simply stunning:

This one is definitely worth a look.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

At first when I read that this was based on a true event, I thought, oh no, don't tell me that a cat died on the Titanic!

But no, this is about the ship's cat and the Irish cabin boy who was in charge of looking after her. I do think cats sense danger, even if it's remote, so the story makes sense to me. The illustrations of the cat and her 4 kittens were SO cute, but the illustrator got mixed-up on the colors of the kittens. In the first picture of them, there's one calico, one black, and one that looks all white. In another picture, there's a kitten that's brownish-gray tabby with white feet, bib, and nose. However, in the last picture, Jim is showing carrying a bag with 4 kitten heads peeping out, and one is orange tabby, one is black, one is gray with white paws, and one is a brownish-gray tabby with white paws but NO white nose. What happened to the white one? Where did the calico one go? Where did the gray one and the orange one come from? The only kitten consistently there is the black one! Anyway, I recommend the story, just keep your eye on the cats.

Julian says

As a fan of history and lover of cats, *Titanicat* was a journey to read. The journey starts before the Titanic sets sail to the United States about a kid and his cat that are going to board the ship. The kid realized the cat is not on the ship when it is about to sail and goes on a journey to find the cats.

Overall, this book is a great historical fiction book about the Titanic. I think it is unique because it does not actually involve the Titanic as much but everyone knows about it so they know what happens to the ship. In this story the reader can realize that the cat causing the kid to miss the boarding call and get left behind is a blessing in disguise. I loved the picture quality and attention to detail that the illustrator uses.

Mariana Gutierrez says

Titanicat is a true story about a young boy named Jim who was working on the Titanic ship. He was from Ireland, and the Irish traditions say that having a cat on a ship brings the vessel good luck. Jim begins to work preparing for the passengers to come aboard, and he finds a cat, whom he names 401, and the cat's family. He decides to care for the litter while his time on the ship. The day the passengers get to board the Titanic, Jim notices the cat, 401, leaving the boat with one of her kittens. The cat drops off the kitten and goes back to pick up the rest. Jim is watching 401 and thinks to himself about the Irish tradition that if a cat meows or leaves the ship, it is not a good sign for the voyage ahead. Just before the Titanic leaves the harbor, Jim jumps off the boat with a kitten that 401 hadn't had the time to save. Jim is upset about not being able to sail with the Titanic, but decides to find work elsewhere to care for himself and the litter. A few days later, Jim discovers that the Titanic hit an iceberg and that many people died who were on the ship. He is left speechless, but is grateful for 401 who saved his life.

The major theme in this book is friendship. Even though the friendship isn't between two people, the cat became a close friend to Jim while he began preparing for the voyage. Ultimately it shows how this friendship saved Jim's life because he decided to follow and protect the litter.

I found this book interesting since it is over a true event. The Titanic is such a popular story, but what really interested me was the fact that it is from a different perspective. Many people know about the love story portrayed in the movie, or they know about the general story of the ship sinking. Although the ending of the Titanic will always end in the same tragedy, *Titanicat* gives the more hopeful story of someone who survived. The images are also beautiful, and they are very realistic that they help children envision the story and all the details between the lines.

I would recommend this book to teachers to use for lessons about the Titanic or over different perspectives to a story. The book is also very entertaining to read on its own, so parents could also benefit from having this book in their library. However, I feel like it would be good resource for a classroom history lesson as it is a true story, but it is written in narrative format.

Kylie Svoboda says

audience: third through 5th graders. Students who have already learned about the ship Titanic's great tragedy. Also students who enjoy history and who enjoy learning new vocabulary.

appeal: a cat ends up saving a young boy's life by preventing him from boarding the ship.

awards: YHBH Indiana Award and Golden Sower Award

George says

"I hope you're happy. Now look what you've made me do." Jim said these words with understandably great disappointment. But far deeper than these words and the misfortune he chose to endure, was a tender heart willing to make a huge sacrifice to right what seemed like 4-0-1's negligent moment.

Jennifer says

Based on the true story of a cabin boy who escaped the sinking of the *Titanic* thanks to the ship's lucky cat, *Titanicat* reimagines the details of the story using historical facts such as diaries, interviews with survivors, and models of the ship itself.

The illustrations, by Robert Papp, recreate the grandeur of the Titanic in what appear to be oils on canvas (no illustration note). Whatever the medium, the paintings are filled with bright, almost glowing colors, and texture that gives them depth. However, there were some details that bothered me. The mother cat gives birth to four kittens according to the text, but in the picture of the new cat family we only see the mother and three kittens; a portion of the audience for this book is bound to be the cat-crazy and they will be sure to notice this discrepancy. Sometimes the illustrations of Jim, the cabin boy, are a little photo-realistic to match the rest of the illustrations and he's certainly much too clean for the position he holds on the ship; in general the story is pretty romanticized by both the illustrations and the text.

The text is long enough that it limits the audience for this picture book to 1st grade at the youngest and more likely to even older readers. The book is probably a good fit for school libraries where there's high interest in the *Titanic* disaster or regular storytimes for older kids. Crisp starts with an introductory note on the *Titanic* which includes lots of fun facts about the disaster and ends with an Author's Note giving a short description of his research process and sources.

J.D. Holman says

Kids love books about the Titanic. Kids love cats. Put them together, based on a true story, and you have a winner. I read this to lower elementary classes, and you probably could have heard a pin drop.

Historical fact spoiler alert: the cat and her kittens survive. So don't worry about upsetting the kids (or yourself).

Jenifer Neilsen says

Audience: Primary

Genre: Historical fiction

Golden Sower Award Winner 2011

Pre-reading strategy: Anticipation Guide (a graphic organizer used to activate students' prior knowledge and build curiosity about a new topic. They are used to stimulate students' interest in a topic and set a purpose for reading.)

A young boy, Jim Mulholland, can't believe his luck when he has signed on as a cabin boy to the world's finest ocean liner, the Titanic. He can't wait for the history-making voyage across the ocean to America. As part of his new duties and having a way with animals, Jim is put in charge of the ship's cat, a beautiful tortoiseshell. He names the cat by the ship's construction number, 4-0-1, certain that she will bring him good luck. While carrying out his work, he becomes worried as 4-0-1 has disappeared and begins searching the enormous ship. Finally, he is delighted when he finds that 4-0-1 gave birth to a litter of kittens. After two weeks of fittings and sprucings, and trial runs, the Titanic is ready to launch to sea. Jim notices that 4-0-1 is nowhere to be found, he has got to find her. The Titanic can't cast off without her lucky cat. Jim has to make a choice that will affect the rest of his life.

In the classroom, I would set the purpose of the anticipation guide, by making text to self connections with cats as pets and/or previous knowledge of The Titanic. It would be set up with 5 columns labeled statement, agree or disagree, page, correct?, reflect. Statements would include: The Titanic is the world's biggest ship. Jim is excited to be on the Titanic. The cat should not be on the ship. Jim cares about the cat. The cat gets Jim in trouble. Jim leaves the cat in Southampton. We would begin using the guide just with the beautiful illustrations. Then move into the text. As we discuss each statement, we would also make predictions for the end of the story.

Cecilia says

This was such a cute story. It made me tear up a bit in the end. The illustrations are gorgeous!

Carrie says

A fairly cute book about superstitions and a (fictitious?) boy who probably would've died had he been on the ship, as most of the steerage- and working-class passengers did. There are lots of similar stories of people who missed the "unsinkable" voyage. Interesting.

Lisa Nielsen says

I LOVED "Titanicat", and in fact have chosen to write my pre-reading strategy on this book. I love that it is essentially a true story (history -- cross-curricular merit), I love that it involves the Titanic, as this subject seems to continue to interest a lot of children as well as adults, and I especially love that it has cats. (I can't yet speak for the older grades, but with my 2nd graders, anything's always been better if it involves an animal or two.) I found a journal article that was of particular interest to me, as I was having difficulty deciding whether I wanted to use the pre-questioning or vocabulary preview pre-reading strategy with "Titanicat". The study (cited below*) examined (among other things) student preference for, and the ultimate effectiveness of, applying a pre-questioning strategy vs. a vocabulary preview strategy re: reading comprehension. The results fascinate me: while the students far preferred the vocabulary pre-teaching strategy, the study demonstrated that the pre-questioning strategy was more effective. In light of this, I decided I would implement both strategies in my classroom, then informally poll the students to see which strategy they preferred vs. which proved most effective re: reading comprehension to see if my classroom results were similar.

* TESL CANADA JOURNAL. "Effects of pre-reading strategies on EFL/ESL reading comprehension". Vol. 28, No. 2, Spring 2011.

Christine says

I was unfamiliar with the story of the boy who cared for the Titanic's cat and followed it off at the last stop before it sank. The story was well written and portrayed the events and history of this tale well.

The illustrations are very warm and soft looking. The kittens seem as though they could jump right off the page and onto your lap. I think that portraying the main character from Ireland with red hair and green eyes was a bit of Hollywood typecasting (most people with red hair come from Scotland, not Ireland) but otherwise I have nothing negative to say about them.

As with all picture books that tell the story of a historical event, there is a nice page listing primary sources and museums for further learning. One thing I found of interest in the sources was a listing for the Titanic Museum in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. Being a native of Massachusetts I had never heard of such a place so I Googled it. Lo and behold, it's a neighborhood in Springfield. Learned something else new today.

I would recommend this book for older children since it is rather text heavy and the subject matter of sinking ships and loss of life might be a little disturbing for the preschool set; although there are no illustrations of the actual sinking, it is mentioned in the story.

EmiLee says

Audience:Primary/Intermediate

Genre:Historical Fiction

Pre-Reading Strategy:KWL

I would introduce the book by showing the class the cover of the book and reading the title. I would ask them what is in the background of the front cover (the Titanic). I would then explain that we would be using the KWL strategy. We would start the K (know) section. I would ask students what they know about the Titanic. I would also ask where they think the cat fits in. The students would have the opportunity to fill in information on the smartboard. After we have finished discussing what we already know about the Titanic/cats we would start the W section which is what the students would like to know. I am guessing the students would want to know more about the cat and how it fits into the story about the Titanic. The students may also want to know more about the Titanic. After students have had the opportunity to share and put responses on the smartboard, I would read the introduction at the beginning of the book. The introduction gives a brief description of the Titanic and peaks the reader's curiosity about a cat aboard the Titanic. After reading the intro, I would spend a few moments with the class adding any additional information to the K or W section of the chart. I will keep the chart to refer to after reading to fill in the L (learned) section and to determine if the students' questions were answered after reading the story. I would also discuss with students where to find out more information about the Titanic if some questions were left unanswered.
