

Synopsis: Edmund Fitzgerald

Join us as we explore the story of the wreck of the great freighter, the Edmund Fitzgerald, from multiple angles. Crewman Harry takes us back to the night of the tragic final journey of "The Fitz" and we learn about the valiant effort of Captain Gerald McSorley and his crew to steer the big ship to safe harbor. Later, with the guidance of the veteran seaman Dennis Hale, the kids read and consider four different explanations for the mysterious sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. Finally, we meet Katie, the granddaughter of a crew member, and we think together about how best to commemorate a momentous and tragic event such as this, and we explore the mixture of feelings still felt by those whose lives were touched by this catastrophe.

Major Themes:

Tragedy and Remembrance. The story of the Edmund Fitzgerald is, in part, a sad story of death and destruction. It is also a story that pays tribute to the men and women who risk their lives to carry cargo on the Great Lakes. We engage the kids in sharing their thoughts about confronting loss and danger, while also seeking to focus on how we commemorate tragedy and pay tribute to heroes.

Problem-Solving. One of the focal points of the module is looking at the alternative explanations for the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, and thinking about the merits of each argument. This section of the module engages the kids as questioners and critical thinkers, and challenges them to consider multiple explanations for an event. We also attempt to

What do cargo freighters do? As we revisit the final voyage of the "Big Fitz" we take a look at what Great Lakes cargo freighters do, and where they travel. We also offer a glimpse into the lives of the sailors who work on the big ships.

Related 4th Grade GLCE Requirements:

H3.0.3 Describe how the relationship between the location of natural resources and the location of industries (after 1837) affected and continues to affect the location and growth of Michigan.

Persuasive Communication: Communicate a reasoned position on a public issue.

R.NT.04.03 Analyze characters' thoughts and motivation through dialogue, various character roles, and functions including hero, anti-hero, or narrator; know first person point of view and identify conflict and resolution.

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R.CM.04.01 Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

(Most of the thought questions at the bottom of each page directly address the above requirement. The questions are very simple yet relevant to the fourth grade age group, and are centered on both personal expression and interesting group discussions).

R.NT.04.01-04 – Narrative Text. [Analyzing the meaning, themes, human experience, and textual effects in quality literature.]
(This is a narrative selection with characters that have motivations and clearly demonstrates the first person point of view).

W.PR.04.01 Set a purpose, consider audience, and replicate authors' styles and patterns when writing a narrative or informational piece.

Characters:

Captain James Wilson
Katie McSimmons
Captain Gerald McSorley
Harry Hilgemann
Captain Jesse Cooper
Dennis Hale