Titanic Essay, Research Paper

Titanic

The Titanic is said to be unsinkable and it was a time in America that we thought we where unsinkable. Wade believed that the Titanic was an enduring symbol of the twentieth century. Was the he right? That is what we are to find out in this paper. We will figure this out by looking at the connections Wade uses in this book and how and why does he argue that the ship and its subsequent maiden voyage reflect the Gilded Age in America in its entirety. The Titanic was doomed from the beginning.

First off to help get a better understanding of the book you need a little background of the ship itself. According to Britannic.com the Titanic was one of the largest and most luxurious ships in the world. It had a gross registered tonnage of 46,329 tons, and when fully laden the ship weighed 66,000 tons. The Titanic was 882.5 feet long and 92.5 feet wide at its widest point. It had a double-bottomed hull divided into 16 compartments that were presumed to be watertight. Because four of these could be flooded without endangering the liner’s buoyancy, it was considered unsinkable.

Shortly before midnight on April 14, the ship collided with an iceberg about 400 miles south of Newfoundland, and at least five of its watertight compartments toward the bow were ruptured. The first four of these five compartments filled with water, which pulled down the bow of the ship. The Titanic compartments were not capped at the top, so water from the ruptured forward compartments filled each succeeding compartment aft as the ship’s incline brought the bow below the waterline. The ship sank at 2:20 AM April 15. The Titanic had only 1,178 lifeboat spaces for the 2,224 persons aboard, and many of the lifeboats were lowered into the water only partly filled with passengers, thus leaving many people stranded on the sinking ship. As a result, about 1,500 people died.

The Titanic was an enduring symbol of the twentieth century. During this time Americans thought there was no better place to live. It was a time when there was great wealth in this country and great pride. America just came out of some tough times a things where looking good. They believed in building things big to show off their wealth. Companies would spend tons of money on their building just so they looked better then the rest. The same could be said about the Titanic. It was a ship designed to show to the world we where better then they. There was no detail to small and in most cases the ships designers went overboard. It was the largest ship in the world. It was a time when everyone believed in showing off his or her wealth and what better way to do that then the Titanic itself. The boat had several different theme designed rooms. The way to best get a feel for the boat was to be a first class passenger. Their suites had fireplaces that burned coal in the sitting rooms and gigantic beds in the bedroom. Most upper class people had dinner at a huge restaurant on one of the decks. There were a few other places to have dinner on the boat, even a real French restaurant. During the day many of the first class passengers spent their days in these elaborate lounges. The Titanic was a luxurious hotel. This is how things where to be during this time period. There was a distinct line drawn between the upper class and the middle class. It was a time when the upper class looked down on any class below them. The upper class likes to show of its money to rub it in so to speak to any class that was under them. This boat helped them do that. It you compare the rooms with someone from the upper class to that of the lower it is like night and day. If you did not have a first class ticket then you did not really have a room. You where sort of grouped together into one room. Some even just had bunks along the side of some cabins. If you where in the upper class you had elaborate dinning areas to eat at. Some of them even had themes. If you where in the middle class you ate at a big basic halls. Someone in the upper class had his or her chose of areas to go to. There where plenty of big spacious studies or lounges for them to sit and enjoy their voyage. There was nothing like that for the middle class. Just like the time the Titanic showed it was good to be wealthy.

Before we go into how this reflects the Gilded Age one would need a better understanding of the Gilded Age. Britannic.com describes it as the following a period of gross materialism and blatant political corruption in U.S. history during the 1870s that gave rise to important novels of social and political criticism. The period takes its name from the earliest of these, The Gilded Age, written by Mark Twain in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner. The novel gives a vivid and accurate description of Washington, D.C., and is peopled with caricatures of many leading figures of the day, including greedy industrialists and corrupt politicians. Twain’s satire was followed in 1880 by Democracy, a political novel published anonymously by the historian Henry Adams. Adams’ book deals with a dishonest midwestern senator and suggests that the real source of corruption lies in the unprincipled attitudes of the wild and lawless West. An American Politician, by Francis Marion Crawford, focused upon the disputed election of Pres. Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, but its significance as a political novel is diluted by an overdose of popular romance.

The Gilded Age and the Titanic seem to go hand and hand. The Gilded Age has a recurring theme of wealth and grandeur throughout the history of the United States. The Titanic was a perfect example of something built during this time period. This country had seen it share of ups and downs and during this time period it was at the highest up it has ever been at. The ship showed off all that was right with America. It showed that the United States was an elite country. There was something far more wrong with the ship and the times in which it was built, the big distinctions between the upper class and the middle class. This time period may be looked at as a time of great wealth. But, who had the wealth? They re where only a few numbers of people during this time whom an enough wealth where they could afford a first class ticket aboard the Titanic. It was a get rich quick society and those who did not where left out. The American wasted more money more recklessly than anyone ever did before; he spent more to less purpose than any extravagant court-aristocracy; he had no sense of relative values (Britannic). This country was heading for a major disaster. Just like the sinking of the Titanic we got it. The ship that was said to be unsinkable sank and so did this country. It was a careless time and it came back to hurt them. A time when it was good to show off ones wealth but what good is all that wealth if one is not prepared for the future. As a whole this country was to busy worrying about how good their home or building looked and did not spend enough time looking ahead. How did not one see the iceberg coming there was plenty of warning? Instead we increased our speed right at the object thinking our unsinkable ship will have no problem with such a small obstacle. When they did decide to try a turn the ship away from the iceberg it was to late. The ship hit the iceberg and began to sink. The ship went down and so did our economy. They where stacking things to high eventually it had to fall down. The sinking of the Titanic brought to an end the Gilded Age and all of its ideas. The county was on its greatest high now it was ready to head for it s lowest of lows.

316