



# For Whom the Bell Tolls



Janet Larson

## LESSON FOUR

### Subject/Grade:

- Grade 4 Language Arts and Social Studies

### Duration:

5 class periods:

- 1 period - listen to books and song, answer questions
- 1 period - watch video;
- 1 period - computer lab for research
- 1 period - write biography
- 1 period - presentation

### Materials needed:

- *Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald* (DVD) by Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum
- DVD player
- Great Lakes map of shipping/receiving ports from Lake Carriers Association ([www.lcaships.org](http://www.lcaships.org)) or Lake Superior Circle Tour map (1-888-BIG LAKE)
- *The Big Fitz* by Jack Edwards.
- *The Edmund Fitzgerald* by Kathy-Jo Wargin.
- CD with song by Gordon Lightfoot *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*

Per student:

- Words to the song *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*
- Questions about song (student page)
- Graphic organizer (Hand outline)

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## Lesson Overview

Students will gain an appreciation of Great Lakes maritime history by becoming familiar with the unfortunate experience of the Edmund Fitzgerald, a Great Lakes freighter lost on Lake Superior in 1975. Students will listen to the song “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” by Gordon Lightfoot, read two stories, and watch a video. Students will build a closer connection to the Edmund Fitzgerald crew members by choosing one of the 29 crew members about which to research and write a short biography. Students will gain an appreciation for Great Lakes freighters and their crews, and respect for the power and size of Lake Superior.

## Learning Objectives

After this lesson, students will be able to

1. Locate on a map of Lake Superior, or the Great Lakes, the port of origin and the intended destination of the Edmund Fitzgerald on her last journey, and the location of Whitefish Point.
2. Describe what happened to the *Edmund Fitzgerald* on Nov. 15, 1975?
3. Conduct online research to complete a graphic organizer.
4. Write a short biography about an Edmund Fitzgerald crew member.
5. Present the crew member’s biography to the class.

## STANDARDS



### Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) Addressed

#### Grade 4 Language Arts

##### R.IT.04.01

identify and describe the structure, elements, features, and purpose of a variety of informational genre including autobiography/biography, personal essay, almanac, and newspaper.

##### W.GN.04.04

use the writing process to produce and present a research project using a teacher-approved topic; find and narrow research questions; use a variety of resources; take notes; and organize relevant information to draw conclusions.

##### W.PR.04.02

apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for both narrative and informational writing (e.g., graphic organizers such as maps, webs, Venn diagrams) in order to generate, sequence, and structure ideas (e.g., plot, setting, conflicts/resolutions, definition/description, or chronological sequence).

##### W.PR.04.05

proofread and edit writing using appropriate resources (e.g., dictionary, spell check, grammar check, grammar references, writing references) and grade-level checklists both individually and in groups

##### S.CN.04.02

adjust their use of language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes including community-building, appreciation, invitations, and cross-curricular discussions.

##### L.RP.04.05

respond to and summarize the major ideas and evidence presented in spoken messages and formal presentations.

## Background

An excellent source of information on the Edmund Fitzgerald is: [www.shipwreckmuseum.com/fitz](http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com/fitz)

## Advance Preparation

Make copies of the questions about the song, the song lyrics, and the graphic organizer, for each student.

## Procedure

1. Have students listen carefully to the words of the Gordon Lightfoot song “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” and take notes as they listen. Discuss the story of the Edmund Fitzgerald using the information gained from the line-by-line analysis on these websites: <http://home.europa.com/~random7/fitz.htm#line> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Wreck\\_of\\_the\\_Edmund\\_Fitzgerald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wreck_of_the_Edmund_Fitzgerald)
2. Have students answer ten questions on *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* using their notes.
3. Display a map of Lake Superior or the Great Lakes. Ask students to show the planned route of the Edmund Fitzgerald from Duluth, to Whitefish Point, the Soo locks, and on to Detroit, and then Cleveland, its winter destination.
4. Read aloud *The Big Fitz* and *The Edmund Fitzgerald* stories to the students.
5. Watch Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald DVD (15 minutes).
6. Have students choose one crew member to research (if necessary, place names in a hat so choice is random). Students should use the graphic organizer to discover 5 facts about their crew member, in addition to their name, age, home town, occupation and a description



of their job responsibilities aboard ship. Provide students with a list of recommended websites and spend one class period in the computer lab researching their crew member.

7. Have students type a draft, share and revise with a partner, and write their final draft.
8. Have students practice presenting their biography at home.
9. Have students present their biography to the class. After each biography is read, ring a bell.

## Assessment of Student Learning

See answer key for *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*:

### Summary of Points:

Questions:	5 points
Graphic organizer:	5 points
Biography:	5 points (1 point each for 5 facts, complete sentences, organization, grammar, final copy is neat and legible)
Presentation:	5 points
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>20 points</b>

## Extensions

Have class participate in Adopt a Ship Program where they correspond with a ship's crew to learn of their experiences throughout the school year: [http://www.marad.dot.gov/education/adopt\\_a\\_ship/](http://www.marad.dot.gov/education/adopt_a_ship/)

Teach the Great Lakes Shipping & Receiving Ports Lesson by the Western U.P. Center for Science, Mathematics & Environmental Education available at: [http://wupcenter.mtu.edu/education/great\\_lakes\\_maritime/lessons-activities/index.htm](http://wupcenter.mtu.edu/education/great_lakes_maritime/lessons-activities/index.htm)

Take a virtual tour of Whitefish Point Shipwreck Museum [www.shipwreckmuseum.com](http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com)

## STANDARDS



### Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) Addressed

#### Grade 4 Social Studies

4 – H3.0.1

Use historical inquiry questions to investigate the development of Michigan's major economic activities (agriculture, mining, manufacturing, lumbering, tourism, technology, and research) from statehood to present. (C, E)

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- How and why did it happen?
- How does it relate to other events or issues in the past, in the present, or in the future?
- What is its significance



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## WEBSITES FOR STUDENT USE

Great Lakes Shipwreck museum  
[www.shipwreckmuseum.com](http://www.shipwreckmuseum.com)

S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald Online  
[www.ssefo.com](http://www.ssefo.com)

Sault Ste. Marie, MI Mystery of Shipwreck  
[www.saultstemarie.com](http://www.saultstemarie.com)

Great Lakes & Seaway Shipping  
[www.boatnerds.com](http://www.boatnerds.com)

Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald (a great listing of websites about the Edmund Fitzgerald)  
<http://www.corfid.com/gl/wreck.htm>

## References

Edwards, Jack. (2000) *The Big Fitz*. Barrington, IL. Rigby Literacy.

*Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. (1996). Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum. <http://www.edmundfitzgerald.org/index.phtml> (15 minutes)

Wargin, Kathy Jo. (2003). *The Edmund Fitzgerald*. Chelsea, MI. Sleeping Bear Press.

Words to the song *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* <http://home.pacbell.net/chabpyne/lyrics.html>

Lake Carriers Association [www.lcaships.org](http://www.lcaships.org) or <http://www.lcaships.com/GL-Map.pdf>



## Crew of the Edmund Fitzgerald

Twenty-nine brave men lost their lives on November 10, 1975. The website <http://www.ssefo.com/index.html> is dedicated to those brave men. Their names, ages, occupations, and hometowns are listed below. Visit <http://www.ssefo.com/crew/index.html> to view profiles of the crew.

Name	Age	Occupation Onboard	Hometown
Michael E. Armagost	37	Third Mate	Iron River, Wisconsin
Fred J. Beetcher	56	Porter	Superior, Wisconsin
Thomas D. Bentsen	23	Oiler	St. Joseph, Michigan
Edward F. Bindon	47	First Asst. Engineer	Fairport Harbor, Ohio
Thomas D. Borgeson	41	Maintenance Man	Duluth, Minnesota
Oliver J. Champeau	41	Third Asst. Engineer	Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin
Nolan S. Church	55	Porter	Silver Bay, Minnesota
Ransom E. Cundy	53	Watchman	Superior, Wisconsin
Thomas E. Edwards	50	Second Asst. Engineer	Oregon, Ohio
Russell G. Haskell	40	Second Asst. Engineer	Millbury, Ohio
George J. Holl	60	Chief Engineer	Cabot, Pennsylvania
Bruce L. Hudson	22	Deck Hand	North Olmsted, Ohio
Allen G. Kalmon	43	Second Cook	Washburn, Wisconsin
Gordon F. MacLellan	30	Wiper	Clearwater, Florida
Joseph W. Mazes	59	Special Maintenance Man	Ashland, Wisconsin
John H. McCarthy	62	First Mate	Bay Village, Ohio
Ernest M. McSorley	63	Captain	Toledo, Ohio
Eugene W. O'Brien	50	Wheelsman	Toledo, Ohio
Karl A. Peckol	20	Watchman	Ashtabula, Ohio
John J. Poviach	59	Wheelsman	Bradenton, Florida
James A. Pratt	44	Second Mate	Lakewood, Ohio
Robert C. Rafferty	62	Steward	Toledo, Ohio
Paul M. Riippa	22	Deck Hand	Ashtabula, Ohio
John D. Simmons	63	Wheelsman	Ashland, Wisconsin
William J. Spengler	59	Watchman	Toledo, Ohio
Mark A. Thomas	21	Deck Hand	Richmond Heights, Ohio
Ralph G. Walton	58	Oiler	Fremont, Ohio
David E. Weiss	22	Cadet	Agoura, California
Blaine H. Wilhelm	52	Oiler	Moquah, Wisconsin



# Employment Aboard Ships

Below are a few maritime job descriptions for crew members\*:

## **Ordinary Seaman**

Stands watch while in port or at sea and performs routine deck department maintenance tasks, such as cleaning, painting, and preserving the ship.

## **Able Bodied Seaman**

Stands watch while in port or at sea and performs routine deck department maintenance tasks, such as cleaning, painting, and preserving the ship. Other responsibilities include underway replenishment, cargo handling, forklift operation and helicopter flight deck operations.

## **Utility person (Food Handler)**

Responsible for general hotel service work such as food handling, cleaning and maintenance of staterooms and passageways, assisting the Chief Steward with daily provisions, and manning underway replenishment rigs.

## **Engine Utility person**

Assists licensed engineers and performs general maintenance and repair of the ship's machinery, including cargo handling equipment, elevators and winches.

## **Deck Engineer Machinist**

Fabricates replacement parts utilizing various types of machinery.

## **Unlicensed Junior Engineer**

Stands engine room watch, assists licensed engineers with control room operations, and maintains the shipboard propulsion equipment and auxiliary machinery.

## **2nd Electrician**

Performs routine maintenance, repair and operation of electrical systems.

## **Refrigeration Engineer**

Maintains and repairs all types of on-board refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment.

## **Electronics Technician**

Proficient in the use of test and monitoring equipment, and repairs and maintains electrical and electronic equipment.

## **Wiper**

Duties include general engine department maintenance, cleaning, painting, preservation of ship and assisting unlicensed and licensed engineering department personnel with machinery repairs.

\* From U.S. DOT Maritime Administration (MARAD):  
<http://www.marad.dot.gov/acareerafloat/index.htm>



## The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald



Listen carefully to the song *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald* and see if you can answer these questions:

1. What did the Chippewa Indians call Lake Superior? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the Edmund Fitzgerald carrying? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What kind of a ship was the Fitzgerald? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which month did the Edmund Fitzgerald go down? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where was the ship heading? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did the crew get to eat breakfast that day? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many more miles did they have to travel to reach the shelter of Whitefish Bay? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do they know for sure what caused the Ed Fitz to sink? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many men were lost on the Edmund Fitzgerald? \_\_\_\_\_
10. The song says the boat sailed into “the face of a hurricane west wind.”  
Is it possible to have a hurricane on Lake Superior? \_\_\_\_\_



# The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

## Answer Key

1. *Gitchee Gumee*
2. *26,013 tons of iron ore pellets called taconite, used mainly for automobile production.*
3. *A “laker” or a Great Lakes freighter. It was 729 feet long.*
4. *November*
5. *The Fitzgerald was “downbound” to unload its cargo in Detroit and then continue on to Cleveland to dock for the winter months.*
6. *From the song lyrics: Dawn came late and the breakfast had to wait...*
7. *The song states ‘15 miles.’*

*Whitefish Point provides a natural shelter for ships during late November gales sweeping across the big lake from the Northwest. The Edmund Fitzgerald was making for the shelter of Whitefish Bay when it foundered about 17 miles short of Whitefish Point (the song states “15 miles.” High traffic, unpredictable fog, early spring and late fall storms have resulted in Whitefish Bay being the highest concentration of shipwrecks in Lake Superior.*

8. *No.*

*Although there is no conclusive evidence, the most popular theory is that because the Fitz was taking on water, the taconite cargo shifted toward the bow making it unbalanced, and heavy to the front. When the Fitz plunged into the valley between two large waves, the 729 foot boat submarined to the bottom (average depth of 533 feet), striking the lake’s floor with enough force to break her in two.*

### *Open Hatch Theory:*

- *Coast Guard believed there were leaking hatches*
- *Believed large waves entered cargo hold through bad seals around hatches*
- *Believed that some hatch clamps were not fastened securely*

### *Shoaling Theory:*

- *Lake Carriers Association thought Ed Fitz struck bottom at Six Fathom Shoals, damaging hull of ship*
- *Believed the captain accidentally drove ship over shallow area.*
- *Pressure from hitting bottom would have blown vents off of deck.*

9. *29 men lost their lives*
10. *No. Hurricanes start over the oceans in tropical areas, taking in moist air and thermal energy from the ocean surface.*



# The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

Words and music copyright 1976 by Gordon Lightfoot

The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down  
Of the big lake they called 'Gitche Gumee'  
The lake, it is said, never gives up her dead  
When the skies of November turn gloomy  
With a load of iron ore twenty-six thousand tons  
more  
Than the Edmund Fitzgerald weighed empty.  
That good ship and true was a bone to be  
chewed  
When the gales of November came early.



The ship was the pride of the American side  
Coming back from some mill in Wisconsin  
As the big freighters go, it was bigger than most  
With a crew and good captain well seasoned  
Concluding some terms with a couple of steel  
firms  
When they left fully loaded for Cleveland  
And later that night when the ship's bell rang  
Could it be the north wind they'd been feelin'?



The wind in the wires made a tattle-tale sound  
And a wave broke over the railing  
And every man knew, as the captain did too,  
T'was the witch of November come stealin'.  
The dawn came late and the breakfast had to  
wait  
When the Gales of November came slashin'.  
When afternoon came it was freezin' rain  
In the face of a hurricane west wind.



When supertime came, the old cook came on  
deck sayin'.  
Fellas, it's too rough to feed ya.  
At Seven P.M. a main hatchway caved in, he  
said  
Fellas, it's been good t'know ya  
The captain wired in he had water comin' in  
And the good ship and crew was in peril.

And later that night when his lights went outta  
sight  
Came the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.  
Does any one know where the love of God goes  
When the waves turn the minutes to hours?  
The searches all say they'd have made White-  
fish Bay  
If they'd put fifteen more miles behind her.  
They might have split up or they might have  
capsized;  
May have broke deep and took water.  
And all that remains is the faces and the names  
Of the wives and the sons and the daughters.



Lake Huron rolls, Superior sings  
In the rooms of her ice-water mansion.  
Old Michigan steams like a young man's  
dreams;  
The islands and bays are for sportsmen.  
And farther below Lake Ontario  
Takes in what Lake Erie can send her,  
And the iron boats go as the mariners all know  
With the Gales of November remembered.



In a musty old hall in Detroit they prayed,  
In the Maritime Sailors' Cathedral.  
The church bell chimed till it rang twenty-nine  
times  
For each man on the Edmund Fitzgerald.  
The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down  
Of the big lake they call 'Gitche Gumee'.  
Superior, they said, never gives up her dead  
When the gales of November come early!



*Graphic Organizer*

## **Crew Members of the Edmund Fitzgerald**

Facts should include:

1. Name, age, home town, and occupation of crew member aboard the ship.
2. Description of their job responsibilities.

Detail or Fact

Detail or Fact

Detail or Fact

Detail or Fact

Detail or Fact

Crew Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

