the 100 years since the Titanic sank, one group of people on board have been reduced to the role of mere ballast. Nameless in almost all accounts of the sinking, they were nevertheless the most numerous, and suffered losses which made even third-class passengers seem privileged. They were the crew: the poor bloody, loyal crew.

One of the first confirmations of sorts appeared in the window of the Southampton Times where a notice said the Titanic was “probably sinking”. Soon that Monday morning, crowds anxious for news had gathered outside the offices of the White Star Line in Canute Road, and the Seafarers’ Union in Terminus Terrace. No doubt there were some who said the worst could not be true because “they” said the Titanic could not sink. RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in 1912, after colliding with an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City. Of the estimated 2,224 passengers and crew aboard, more than 1,500 died, making it one of modern history’s deadliest commercial marine disasters during peacetime. RMS Titanic was the largest ship afloat at the time she entered service and was the second of three Olympic-class ocean liners operated by the White Star Line. It was true! How can you laugh?”: the conflation of history and memory in the reception of Titanic in Britain and Southampton. Massey, Anne and Hammond, Mike (1999) “...it was true! How can you laugh?”: the conflation of history and memory in the reception of Titanic in Britain and Southampton’. In: Titanic: Anatomy of a Blockbuster. Studlar, Gaylyn and Sandler, Kevin S., eds. Rutgers University Press, pp. 239-264. ISBN 9780813526690

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ABSTRACT

[Summary of the book this chapter appears in] On April 14, 1912, the Titanic struck an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland. Taking more than 1,500 souls with her, Titanic sank on what was intended to be the glorious maiden voyage of the biggest, most expensive and most technologically advanced ship ever built. In 1997, James Cameron’s "Titanic", the most expensive and technologically advanced movie ever made, hit theatres. In 13 weeks, it became the highest-grossing film in North America, and shortly thereafter, the first motion picture to earn a billion dollars worldwide. The cultural studies and film scholars who have contributed 13 essays to this collection ask the key question: Why? What made "Titanic" such a popular movie? Why has this film become a cultural and film phenomenon? What makes it so fascinating to the film-going public? The articles address everything from the nostalgia evoked by the film to the semiotic meaningfulness created around "The Heart of the Ocean" diamond that figures so prominently as a symbol. Contributors address questions of the representations of class, sexuality and gender; analyze the cross-cultural reception of the film in nationally specific contexts; and examine the impact of strategies for marketing the film through music.

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