

The SS Edmund Fitzgerald

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Individual Website

Student Composed Words on Site: 1,200

Process Paper: 498

Growing up, one of my favorite historical stories was that of the mighty *Titanic*. I remember watching the movie multiple times, checking books out of the school library, and just soaking up the majesty of her story. Then came the day I first heard “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” by Gordon Lightfoot on the radio. I became fascinated with the epic duel the lyrics told of, and was amazed to find out it was a true story, and it happened on the nearby Great Lakes. So, I downloaded the song on my good old iPod 4, and my love for the story only continued to grow. Well, as I grew older and my music tastes changed, the story of the “Mighty Fitz” slowly slipped further down my priority list. Fast forward to just months ago, when confronted with a huge packet filled with great project ideas, a certain familiar name looked back at me from the page, “The wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald”.

My mind perked up and kicked into gear, combining the information I already knew with how I wanted to tell the story and relate it to this year’s theme. Initially, I was going to analyze the tragic wreck, followed by the triumphant regulation reform that followed. After researching only a bit, I decided to alter my plan to include the *Fitzgerald’s* amazing feats before her wreck. My research began with online sources finding more and more general information and statistics about the ship and her story, but entered a whole new level when I discovered the Coast Guard Casualty report, an excellent primary source filled with a multitude of sketches and essential facts. My research then took a secondary source turn in the reading of Mighty Fitz by Michael Schumacher and Gales of November by Robert Hemming, which provided a great deal of information regarding the *Fitzgerald’s* life before her sinking, and speculated as to the cause of the sinking. In addition, I reached out to both NOAA and the Canadian Hydrographic Service to locate digital copies of the charts the crew would have used in 1975. Due to the government

shutdown, I didn't receive a response from NOAA, but from a sympathetic individual who saw my request and directed me to NOAA's historical chart website. The CHS never responded. Finally, I dug further into the internet uncovering many photographs of the ship, and utilized the GaleNet subscription database to which my school has a subscription.

So, faced with a large amount of online and visual resources, I decided that a website would be the most efficient way to convey the information I had gathered. I have played around with website editors before, further pushing me to build a website. Finally, a website provided me with a medium to show the *Fitzgerald's* relevance to the theme. I cannot think of anything that could better fit the theme of Triumph and Tragedy than a record breaking engineering marvel, losing its epic battle with mother nature.