The Titanic
by Emily Ballard

Age:	Teenagers / Adults
Level:	Intermediate
Time:	60 mins
Aim:	To practise forming sentences in the third conditional
Key skills:	Speaking
Materials:	One set of cut-up strips for every two students; one copy of the worksheet per student; picture of the *Titanic* (optional)

Background note for teachers

The RMS *Titanic* was a passenger ship that sank on 15 April 1912 after hitting an iceberg in the North Atlantic Ocean on her maiden voyage. At the time of the tragedy, she was the largest ship afloat.

See http://www.the-titanic.com for more information.

Procedure

1. Show a picture of the *Titanic*. Ask the students if they recognize the image. Get them to talk in groups of three about what they know about the *Titanic*.

2. As a class, brainstorm the *Titanic*, and clarify the meaning of any emergent language such as *iceberg* and *to sink*. Try to elicit:

   • hit an iceberg

   • was travelling too fast

   • not enough lifeboats

   • lookouts didn't see the iceberg in time/didn't have binoculars

   • rescue ship did not arrive in time

3. Put the students into pairs and hand each pair a set of cut-up strips. Each strip details one event that led to the sinking of the *Titanic*. Pairs work together to put the events in order. Check the correct order as a class.

4. Ask students to think about what would have happened differently if each of the events had not occurred. Demonstrate using the first sentence:

   The *Titanic* does not leave Ireland. = not sink

   Students work in pairs to discuss the different outcomes. Feed back as a class and write the suggested outcomes down on board.

5. Write on the board: *If the* Titanic *had not left*

Ireland, it would not have sunk.

Check that students understand the meaning of the sentence by asking concept questions:

   • Did the *Titanic* leave Ireland? (Yes)
     Did the *Titanic* sink? (Yes)

   • So is this a real or imagined situation? (Imagined)

   • Is it the past, present or future? (Past)

6. Elicit the form of the third conditional from the students. *If* + past perfect, *would (not) have* + past participle

7. If you like, you can highlight the pronunciation of the contracted spoken forms.

   it would have = *it would've*
   it wouldn't have = *it wouldn't've*

8. Hand out the worksheet. Ask students to work alone and then check their answers in pairs.

   Check the answers as a class.

   Key:
   2. had travelled/had been travelling; would have missed/might have missed
   3. had listened; would have been/might have been
   4. had seen; would have told
   5. had not hit; would not have sunk
   6. had been; would have died
   7. had not sunk; would have arrived

9. Write on the board: *We use the third conditional when …*

   Ask students to work in pairs to complete the sentence. Write their suggestions on the board and allow the class to vote for the most accurate answer.

   Key: (possible answer): … we want to speculate about past possibilities.

10. Divide the class into groups of four or five. The first student forms a sentence using the third conditional. The second student then uses the second clause to begin a new sentence. For example:

    Student 1: If I had not come to London, I would have gone to New York.

    Student 2: If I had gone to New York, I would have visited the Empire State Building.

    Student 3: If I had visited the Empire State Building, I would have taken a photo.

    Student 4: If I had taken a photo, I would have sent it to my mum.

    Monitor for emergent language and make notes for delayed correction.

The *Titanic* leaves Ireland.

The captain increases the speed of the ship.

Other ships warn the Titanic about ice but the captain continues at the same speed.

The lookouts do not see the iceberg.

The *Titanic* hits the iceberg

The passengers start to get into the lifeboats but there is not enough room.

The *Titanic* sinks.

Complete the sentences.

1. If the *Titanic* _____ *had not left* _____ (**not leave**) Ireland, it
   _____ *would not have sunk* _____ (**not sink**).

2. If the *Titanic* _____ (**travel**) slowly, it
   _____ (**miss**) the iceberg.

3. If the captain _____ (**listen**) to the warnings, he
   _____ (**be**) more careful.

4. If the lookouts _____ (**see**) the iceberg earlier, they
   _____ (**tell**) the captain in time to save the ship.

5. If the *Titanic* _____ (**not hit**) the iceberg, it
   _____ (**not sink**).

6. If there _____ (**be**) more lifeboats, fewer people
   _____ (**die**).

7. If the *Titanic* _____ (**not sink**), it
   _____ (**arrive**) in New York.