

Developed by Participants in the 2007 [Great Lakes Maritime Transportation Summer Teacher Institute](#) sponsored by the Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute ([www.glmri.org](http://www.glmri.org))

**Edmund Fitzgerald/Great Lakes Shipping**  
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**Secondary Social Studies**

**Subject/Grade:** middle /high school social studies and/or language arts class.

Duration: 2-3 class periods of 60 minutes each.

**Lesson Overview-**

Engage students in the grandness and importance of the Great Lakes and its role in the transporting of vital goods across the Great Lakes and to points beyond. This does not state what students will “do” during the lesson, or anything about careers/jobs and the Ed Fitzgerald which are part of your lesson.

**Objectives**

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to: (must be measurable!)

- i. Identify the five Great Lakes.
- ii. Describe the economic activities that take place there. (what do you mean? Give an example of the economic activities---fishing? Boating? Etc.)
- iii. Explain the possible causes of the Edmund Fitzgerald sinking.
- iv. Explain the role of the U.S. Coast Guard in protecting and defending the Great Lakes and the role they play in shipping.

**Michigan Benchmarks**

Social Studies: Content Standard 11.3 (page 37 in Michigan Curriculum Guide – no longer used)

Location, Movement and Connections--“All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of economic activities, trade, political activities, migration, information flow, and the interrelationships among them.

Language Arts: Content Standard 10 (page 30 in Michigan Curriculum Guide – no longer used)

*Need to list new ELA Course Expectations*

“All students will apply knowledge, ideas and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others.”

**Materials**

Maps-Great Lakes

Freighter model

Truck, train model

Assorted booklets – need to name these and tell where to obtain them

Car model

Bell

Assorted pictures/postcards

The Edmund Fitzgerald, Song of the Bell

Know Your Ships

Notebook paper

Song lyrics for what? Attach to lesson

Song CD – complete reference

Crossword puzzle – from where?

**Room Arrangement**

All students should be seated in a way to view the teacher and the various materials being shown. Students should be able to move desks together for cooperative activity.

### **New Vocabulary**

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. Freighters | 4. Locks    |
| 2. "Lakers"   | 5. Fleet    |
| 3. "Salties"  | 6. Taconite |

### **Background Information**

In 1915, The US formed the US Coast Guard to lead maritime rescues. As modern navigation equipment has dramatically reduced the number of accidents of commercial vessels, the Coast Guard has focused more on the safety of smaller personal watercraft and homeland security.

ADD MORE

### **Focus Questions**

1. Do you know how the steel that is used in your automobile arrived into the factory that built it?
2. Do you know the largest source of freshwater found in the United States?

### **Attention-getter**

1. Can you name the most famous shipwreck to occur in the World? (Titanic)
2. How about the United States? (Edmund Fitzgerald)

### **Classroom Activities**

1. Put an outline map of the Great Lakes on a white board. Label each lake with the first letter that it begins with. Write the H.O.M.E.S acronym across the board. Show students that the acronym provides an easy way to remember all five Great Lakes.

*Activity:* Call on students until all five Great Lakes have been identified.

Continue to go around room so all students have a chance to participate. (there are only 5 lakes....)

Point out all surrounding border states as well as the Canadian border going through all but Lake Michigan. Pass out variety of maps and pictures. (be specific here about what is passed around, so another teacher can replicate.)

2. Explain and show examples of freighters (Lakers vs. Salties), as well as other methods of transportation that work together with freighters to transport materials. Show boats, train, and truck models (why not use a ppt with real photos, rather than toy models). Tell students some of the major products that get shipped in Great Lake Freighters...coal, grain, and taconite. Show example of taconite. Pass around to students. Show model of an automobile and tell students that most of the steel used for automobile production found its way through the Great Lakes in the form of taconite.
3. Tell students that the transportation industry is going to be a very high demand area in the years to come. Tell them about all the various jobs available on freighters, as well as jobs in rail and truck. Show examples of types of income potential possible in Freighter and other transport careers. – please include this info in the lesson....what is the source of this info? Include in references.
4. Discuss the role of the Coast Guard in Great Lakes transportation; keeping ports safe, stopping criminal activity, ensuring safe navigation on the water, rescue operations as well as helping to protect natural resources. – please include this info in the lesson....what is the source of this info? Include in references.

Show various Coast Guard pamphlets, pass around room. – please include titles and where these can be obtained in the References

*Activity: Go around room and ask students which Great Lake Shipping career seems the most interesting to them. Do you have a list of careers?*

5. Show front cover of the book, The Edmund Fitzgerald, Song of the Bell. Show model of bell and where it was located on the ship. Show the taconite sample again and tell students the entire ship was filled with these!  
Talk about the climate of the Great Lakes in November particularly over Lake Superior. Read the above book to students.

*Activity: Have students imagine they are getting ready to sail as a crewmember of a Great Lakes Freighter. Have them describe their thoughts and feelings. This would be a good place to show the Edmund Fitz movie from Whitefish Point*

*Shipwreck: The Mystery of the Edmund Fitzgerald DVD (15 min.)*

by Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, 111 Ashmun St., Sault St Marie, MI 49783 Tel:906-635-1742

The 729-foot Edmund Fitzgerald traveled the Great Lakes for 17 years until November 10, 1975 when she and her crew disappeared beneath the waves of one of Lake Superior's worst storms. On July 4, 1995, honoring a request of the families, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society led an expedition to recover the Fitzgerald's bell.

6. Distribute lyrics to the song, The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.  
Read the lyrics aloud to students to highlight significant historical points.

7. Play the song, The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald by Gordon Lightfoot  
Discuss how the music, lyrics and historical facts make the song memorable

8. Pass out crossword puzzles (where are these from? Please attach). Have students work with a partner to complete. Review all answers together as a class.

9. Have students research the crew of the Edmund Fitzgerald and select one crew member about which to write a one-paragraph summary. Be specific. A paragraph that describes what?

### **Assessments**

1. Students' participation in questions presented.
2. Journal entry- "night before freighter job begins"- this is presented as a discussion above
3. Crossword puzzle – where are the correct answers? This is low level thinking for HS students.
4. Edmund Fitzgerald crew member summary. How do you grade this? Is there a rubric?

### **Extensions**

For extra credit, students can draw their own Great Lakes maps (what do you mean? A freehand drawing? or research a specific freighter currently sailing the Great Lakes.

### **Resources**

Wargin, Kathy-Jo. The Edmund Fitzgerald, Song of the Bell. Chelsea: Sleeping Bear Press, 2003.

LeLievre, Roger et al. Know Your Ships. Sault Ste. Marie: Marine Publishing, 2005

Lightfoot, Gordon. (1976). The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald. Los Angeles, Alfred Publishing.

<http://www.ssefo.com-website> dedicated to the memory of the Edmund Fitzgerald

