

TAKE NOTES

Activate Prior Knowledge

List two things you learned about the Hindenburg in "The Three-Century Woman."

Nonfiction

With what real event does this nonfiction work deal?

What real person is discussed in this nonfiction work?

Nonfiction

There are many kinds of non-fiction, including **biographies**, **diaries**, and **articles**. Explain why this work of nonfiction is classified as an **article**.

Reading Check

Where did the journey of the Hindenburg begin? Circle the city and country.



The Fall of the Hindenburg

Michael Morrison

On May 6, 1937, the German airship Hindenburg burst into flames 200 feet over its intended landing spot at New Jersey's Lakehurst Naval Air Station. Thirty-five people on board were killed (13 passengers and 22 crewmen), along with one crewman on the ground.

803 Feet Long and 242 Tons

The giant flying vessel measured 803.8 feet in length and weighed approximately 242 tons. Its mostly metal frame was filled with hydrogen. It came complete with sleeping quarters, a library, dining room, and a magnificent lounge, but still managed a top speed of just over 80 miles per hour. The zeppelin had just crossed the Atlantic Ocean after taking off from Frankfurt, Germany 2½ days prior on its first transatlantic voyage of the season. Thirty-six passengers and a crew of 61 were on board.

Disaster Strikes

As it reached its final destination in New Jersey, it hovered over its landing spot and was beginning to be pulled down to the ground by landing lines by over 200 crewmen when disaster struck. A burst of flame started just forward of the upper fin, then blossomed into an inferno that engulfed the Hindenburg's tail.

"Oh, the Humanity!"

Many jumped from the burning craft, landed on the soft sand of the naval base below, and lived to tell about it; others weren't so lucky. Herb Morrison, a reporter for WLS Radio in Chicago, happened to be covering the event and cried out the now famous words, "Oh, the Humanity!" The majestic ship turned into a ball of flames on the ground in only 34 seconds.

Vocabulary Development: **airship** (ER ship) *n.* a machine that uses a gas-filled balloon to fly
inferno (in FER noh) *n.* a very large, hot fire

Unknown Cause

The cause of the disaster is still uncertain. At the time, many thought the ship had been hit by lightning. Many still believe that the highly flammable hydrogen was the cause. Some Germans even cried foul play, suspecting sabotage intended to sully the reputation of the Nazi regime. NASA research, however, has shown that the highly combustible varnish treating the fabric on the outside of the vessel most likely caused the tragedy.

Vocabulary Development: **sully** (SUHL ee) *v.* to make dirty or unclean
combustible (kuhm BUS tuh buhl) *adj.* easy to burn
varnish (VAHR nish) *n.* a clear liquid painted onto objects to protect them

Reader's Response: Imagine that you saw the Hindenburg burst into flames. Write two or three sentences that you might have written in your diary on that day.



Nonfiction

Historical context is the real time and place for an event. When the Hindenburg was destroyed, which nation or group was becoming an enemy of the United States?

Stop to Reflect

Why is the Hindenburg so famous?
