

# WHAT <sup>IN THE</sup> WORLD?

LEVEL 2 (GRADES 8 AND UP)

## MSC *Baltic III* on the Rocks

**Free  
Sample**

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**SAMPLE EDITION**  
2025/2026: ISSUE 5

## WHAT IN THE WORLD?

Level 2, 2025/2026: Issue 5

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LesPlan is grateful to the Lkwungen Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose unceded land we now live, and do our work.

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I have had many parents comment to me about how great they think *What in the World?* is, and they look forward to each month's issue coming home... This is a great resource for a small country school to explore the global issues that affect us all.

K. Camelon, Grade 7/8 teacher

Admaston, ON



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# WHAT YOU'RE MISSING



INTERNATIONAL

## SURPRISE RAID OUSTS VENEZUELA'S LEADER



Starting last August, the United States began a large military buildup in the Caribbean region. The stated goal was to combat drug trafficking. But America was also after a bigger target. In the pre-dawn darkness of January 3, a stealthy and extraordinary raid was . . .

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INTERNATIONAL

## LET THE WINTER GAMES BEGIN



As Team Canada prepares for the XXV Winter Olympics, set to occur in northern Italy from February 6 to 22, excitement is building. Athletes will compete in events spread across Milan, Cortina d'Ampezzo, and several nearby regions. It is the first time the Winter . . .

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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## THE WINTER OF '25-'26 IS PACKING A WALLOP



On December 28, a 300-metre-long hydro line broke between two islands in the Nelson River in northern Manitoba. It supplied power to the Pimicikamak Cree Nation, about 530 kilometres north of Winnipeg. That broken power line meant about 4000 people had to leave . . .

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- S. Giffin, Dartmouth, NS





NATIONAL

# BATTERED BY THE SEA

—A YEAR LATER, FREIGHTER STILL AGROUND ON NEWFOUNDLAND COAST

## BEFORE READING

1. Write the title of the article on the board: **Battered by the Sea: —A Year Later, Freighter Still Aground On Newfoundland Coast**

2. Write the 5 Ws and 'How' on the board in table format. See example below:

Who	What	Where	When	Why	How

3. Have students work in small groups or with an elbow partner to come up with one question per column related to the title of the article. (For example: *Who was on the ship?*; *What was on the ship?*; *Where in Newfoundland did the ship go aground?*; *When did this happen?*; *Why is it taking so long to get the ship repaired?*; *How did the ship go aground in the first place?*; etc.)

4. Once students have recorded their questions, have them view this short video of the incident:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt4UVLh7xII> [2:14]. Have students answer their questions from the table above if the answer is provided in the video.

5. Finally, invite students to set a purpose for reading the article, perhaps to answer a question that was not explained in the video, referring to the resource page **Setting A Purpose Before Reading** as needed.



*MSC Baltic III* in Halifax December 13, 2024.

<http://shipfax.blogspot.com/2025/02/mdc-baltic-iii-aground.html>



# NATIONAL BATTERED BY THE SEA

—A YEAR LATER, FREIGHTER STILL AGROUND ON NEWFOUNDLAND COAST



On a cold winter morning last February 15, a ferocious blizzard was raging off Newfoundland's rugged west coast. Wind gusts topped 120 kilometres per hour and waves reached six metres in height. The captain of the *MSC Baltic III* felt the vessel shudder as water crashed against the hull.

Some 207 metres long (about the size of two football fields), the ship had left Montreal with 470 containers filled with goods ranging from food to lumber. It also carried about 1.6 million litres of heavy fuel and marine gas oil.

The vessel had often navigated these dangerous waters, through the Bay of Islands to the city of Corner Brook. But this time was different. The weather had worsened faster than forecasts predicted, and now, in the darkness, the crew's worst fears were materializing.

## EMERGENCY!

Suddenly and without warning, the freighter lost all power. It couldn't be steered or remain pointed into the wind and waves. In heavy seas, that's dangerous—especially near a rocky

shoreline where the water is shallow. Without power, the *Baltic III* became a 33,767-tonne piece of driftwood at the mercy of the angry ocean.

The storm pushed the powerless ship toward shore. The crew tried to use the ship's **anchor**, but this failed. In the early morning, the *MSC Baltic III* ran aground on a rocky shelf at Wild Cove, on Newfoundland's west coast.

## A HARROWING RESCUE

When a vessel is stranded, the crew's safety is the first priority. The ship was stuck on rocks in harsh winter weather. The risk of damage to the **hull** was high, raising the likelihood that it would take on water and endanger the sailors' lives. So the *Baltic III* issued a distress call and alerted officials to the emergency.

Various first responders, including the Canadian **Coast Guard** and the military, reacted quickly. A RCAF Cormorant rescue helicopter arrived from Gander and airlifted all 20 crew members off the ship. The good news: no injuries were reported, despite the severe weather conditions.

## A LONG PROCESS

Once the crew was safe, attention turned to the ship itself. Unlike a damaged car that can sometimes be pushed off the road, a cargo ship that has run aground can be very hard to move—and **salvage** efforts can take months. Attempts to quickly refloat the *Baltic III*, which is owned by the Switzerland-based Mediterranean Shipping Company, failed because its hull had been breached. Water had entered the vessel and parts of the ship's structure had been seriously damaged.

As a result, specialists trained in rescuing and removing stranded vessels were called in. The Coast Guard, working with private contractors, began organizing a long-term response to stabilize the ship. Their goals were to make sure it didn't break apart and to remove as much fuel and dangerous materials as possible. They also wanted to prevent pollution from spreading into the ocean and onto the nearby shoreline.

## PROTECTING THE SEA

What kind of pollution? One of the biggest hazards from a grounded ship

## DEFINITIONS

**ANCHOR:** a heavy object that is attached to a boat by a rope or chain and is thrown into the water to hold the boat in place

**COAST GUARD:** the organization that enforces a country's maritime laws and helps people or boats that are in distress

**HULL:** the main body or outer shell of a boat, ship, or even a tank, keeping water out and people/cargo in

**RCAF:** Royal Canadian Air Force

**SALVAGE:** the act of saving property from destruction



is the onboard fuel. Heavy fuel can cause serious damage if released into the maritime environment. That's why, in the months that followed, salvage crews focused first on removing fuel from the vessel. By summer, they had successfully pumped out most of the heavy fuel from the ship's tanks. Thankfully, the estimated 1600 tonnes they removed reduced the risk of a serious spill.

Next up were the shipping containers. Some were empty, but most were filled with various goods. By late 2025, hundreds had been offloaded. However, some 46 containers remained trapped below deck and submerged under water, making them difficult to get to. These containers must be drained and lifted out one by one—a careful process that depends on calm and safe working conditions.

## BATTLING THE WEATHER

Workers couldn't count on the weather to cooperate, however. Even after the immediate danger of the grounding had passed, the *Baltic III* did not simply sit in one place. The region's powerful storms repeatedly battered the stranded vessel, causing the ship's steel hull to buckle. The upshot? Parts of the structure shifted and salvage equipment onboard was damaged.

What's more, every time bad weather hit, salvage work had to stand down. High winds, rough seas, large waves, and blinding snow made operations unsafe. This means that much of the work—already difficult and technical—stretched out over weeks and months.

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Meanwhile, locals have been watching the situation closely. Fishermen and residents worry that the damaged ship could release more debris or pollutants

## WHY SHIPS RUN AGROUND

The grounding of the *MSC Baltic III* wasn't just bad luck. It was the result of several scientific and engineering factors coming together—weather, ocean physics, ship design, and coastal geography.

Western Newfoundland sits in the path of powerful winter storms. These storms generate large waves and strong winds that push surface water toward shore. When a ship loses power near land, even briefly, waves can move thousands of tonnes of steel like a toy boat. The kind of waves matter, too. Wave energy increases with wave height and the period of time between waves. Long-period waves pack more punch and can shove a powerless vessel onto rocks before crews can respond.

Complicating matters, modern container ships rely almost entirely on their engines for steering. Without **propulsion**, the **rudder** becomes ineffective, anchors may not hold in rough seas, and the ship turns sideways to waves, increasing drag. This condition is known as "loss of steerage." If this happens close to shore, grounding is often unavoidable. And once a ship runs aground, its hull can crack or deform. Seawater enters, adding weight and changing the ship's balance. Even if the tide rises, the vessel may stay pinned to shore.

There's more. In cold regions, steel becomes less flexible. Repeated wave impacts can cause metal fatigue, buckling plates and weakening the hull—making refloating dangerous or impossible. Ships carry heavy fuel oil, which is thick and slow-moving. In cold water, it becomes even more **viscous** and hard to clean up.

if it deteriorates further. At stake is the health of the ocean, shoreline, and local fisheries. Many families depend on these local resources for their livelihood.

"It's pretty serious," said local fisherman Jeff Childs. "Most of the oil's gone, but I'm told there's still 20 tonnes of residual oil aboard."

Lark Harbour lobsterman Gerard Joyce is worried about the potential damage to the surrounding rich fishing area.

"All these chemicals aboard the boat leaking on the lobsters that's there. There's always something coming out of the boat," he stated. "It's got to be removed before something big happens. If the fishery shuts down this community is done."

For their part, Coast Guard patrols and drone surveys have monitored nearby beaches for oil and debris. Workers have cleaned up small oil stains and tar balls—signs that some pollution

had reached shore—but nothing catastrophic has escaped.

## WHAT COMES NEXT?

The situation is ongoing. For now, the *Baltic III* remains grounded. Salvage crews continue with plans to unload more cargo and fuel, and are preparing to remove the vessel. Crews may have to break it apart or find a way to haul it back out to sea when weather conditions allow.

These efforts highlight how challenging maritime accidents can be. The effects on the environment, the local economy, and the logistics of moving goods around the world can be serious. The *Baltic III* grounding reminds us that the sea is powerful, unpredictable, and sometimes unforgiving—and that careful planning, quick response, and persistent effort are essential when things go wrong. ★

## DEFINITIONS

**PROPULSION:** to push forward or drive an object forward

**RUDDER:** a movable blade at the rear end of a ship or airplane, used to control direction

**VISCOUS:** a viscous liquid is thick and sticky and does not flow easily



NATIONAL

# BATTERED BY THE SEA

—A YEAR LATER, FREIGHTER STILL AGROUND ON NEWFOUNDLAND COAST

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. List at least four important facts about the *MSC Baltic III*.

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2. Describe the weather conditions that this cargo ship experienced last February 15.

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3. Explain why the ship started drifting sideways.

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4. Describe what happened next.

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5. Why could the ship not be refloated?

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6. Describe what happened in the weeks and months after the grounding.

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7. How did the focus of the clean up efforts change over the summer months?

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8. Explain why many local residents are concerned.

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NATIONAL

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## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. The article quotes one local fisherman near the grounded *MSC Baltic III*: “*It’s pretty serious. Most of the oil’s gone, but I’m told there’s still 20 tonnes of residual oil aboard.*”

As you see it, how would life for the local community in Lark Harbour, Newfoundland change if fuel leaked along its coastline? Give reasons to support your response.

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2. After reading the details of this incident, and the challenges associated with operating container ships, would you ever consider a career in marine engineering, the Coast Guard, or as a ship crew member? Give reasons to support your response.

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3. Container ships can carry up to 24,000 containers at a time. They deliver all kinds of goods all over the world including cars, furniture, food, clothing, appliances, fuel, etc. How might your life change if for some reason container ships were no longer permitted to operate? Explain.

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# BATTERED BY THE SEA

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## QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE EXPLORATION

*Note:* The links below are listed at [www.lesplan.com/links](http://www.lesplan.com/links) for easy access.

1. Watch this summary of the efforts to stabilize and clean up the *MSC Baltic III*:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFEZnHpr\\_kI&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFEZnHpr_kI&t=8s) [7:03]

What did you learn?

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2. Watch this update from November 2025 that talks about how the extreme Atlantic weather is impacting recovery efforts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHBkt6UwKYk> [3:45]

Describe the weather conditions that are making this recovery challenging.

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3. Check out the full timeline of rescue operations by the Government of Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/corporate/live-operations.html>

What questions do you have?

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4. Visit the official site of the Canadian Coast Guard:

<https://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/index-eng.html>

What did you learn?

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5. Watch the dramatic rescue of the crew of the *MSC Baltic III*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaoC9DQ7j38> [5:31]

List five adjectives you would use to describe the rescue.

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6. Learn how container ships are loaded:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kj7ixi2lqF4> [5:32]

List three ideas that you found interesting.

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7. Check out this infographic showing how the federal government protects Canadian waters from oil spills:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/protecting-canadian-waters-oil-spills-infographic>

What did you find interesting?

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8. Learn more about Canada's Oceans Protection Plan:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/campaigns/oceans-protection-plan>

What connections can you make to this plan?

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NATIONAL

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## IMAGES IN THE NEWS

### Directions:

1. Study the picture carefully. Write the basic problem, condition or action shown in the photograph (e.g., *drought*) in the middle of the web.
2. Then, analyze the chain reactions or consequences. For instance, *in considering the impact the shortage of water might have on the environment or the problems resulting from the drought, you might think about the consequences of unsafe or inadequate water for the environment and for the people affected by the drought.*
3. Work outward from the middle, filling in the ovals in a chain of consequences (e.g., *without water humans have difficulty concentrating, when people can't concentrate they are unable to work effectively, which may lead to losing their job*). Repeat step 3 for each additional chain of consequence (e.g., *lack of water causes reduced plant growth*).



Credit: Canadian Coast Guard 2025-11-10  
Site of *MSC Baltic III* grounding in Cedar Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/corporate/live-operations.html>

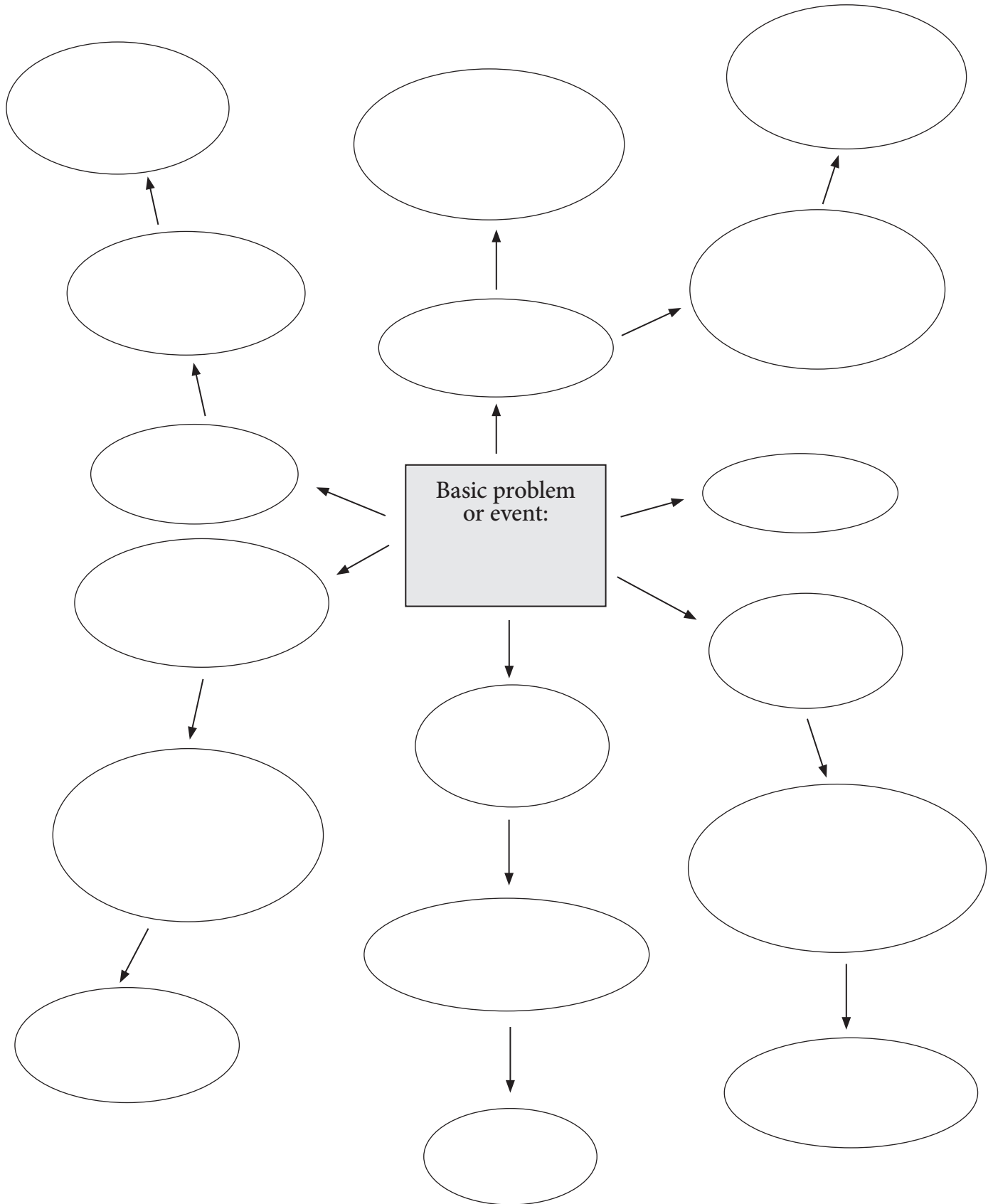
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# ISLAND OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Battered by the Sea*.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read **all** the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map **after** all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

**Resources Required:** pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

**Part A** Locate and label Newfoundland and Labrador in CAPITAL letters and shade it green

**Part B** Locate and label the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador and underline.

**Part C** Locate and label the following in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Quebec (pink) St. Pierre and Miquelon [France] (yellow)

**Part D** Locate and label the following cities and towns:

Corner Brook	Grand Falls-Windsor
Gander	Channel-Port aux Basques

**Part E** Locate and label the following:

Burin Peninsula	Avalon Peninsula
Bonavista Peninsula	Baie Verte Peninsula
Northern Peninsula	

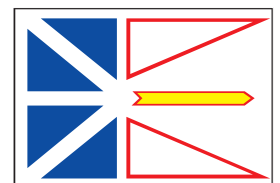
**Part F** Locate and label the following and shade all salt water dark blue:

Atlantic Ocean	Gulf of St. Lawrence
Strait of Belle Isle	Trinity Bay
Placentia Bay	Fortune Bay
Notre Dame Bay	Bay of Islands
St. George's Bay	

**Part G** Locate and label the Trans Canada Highway.

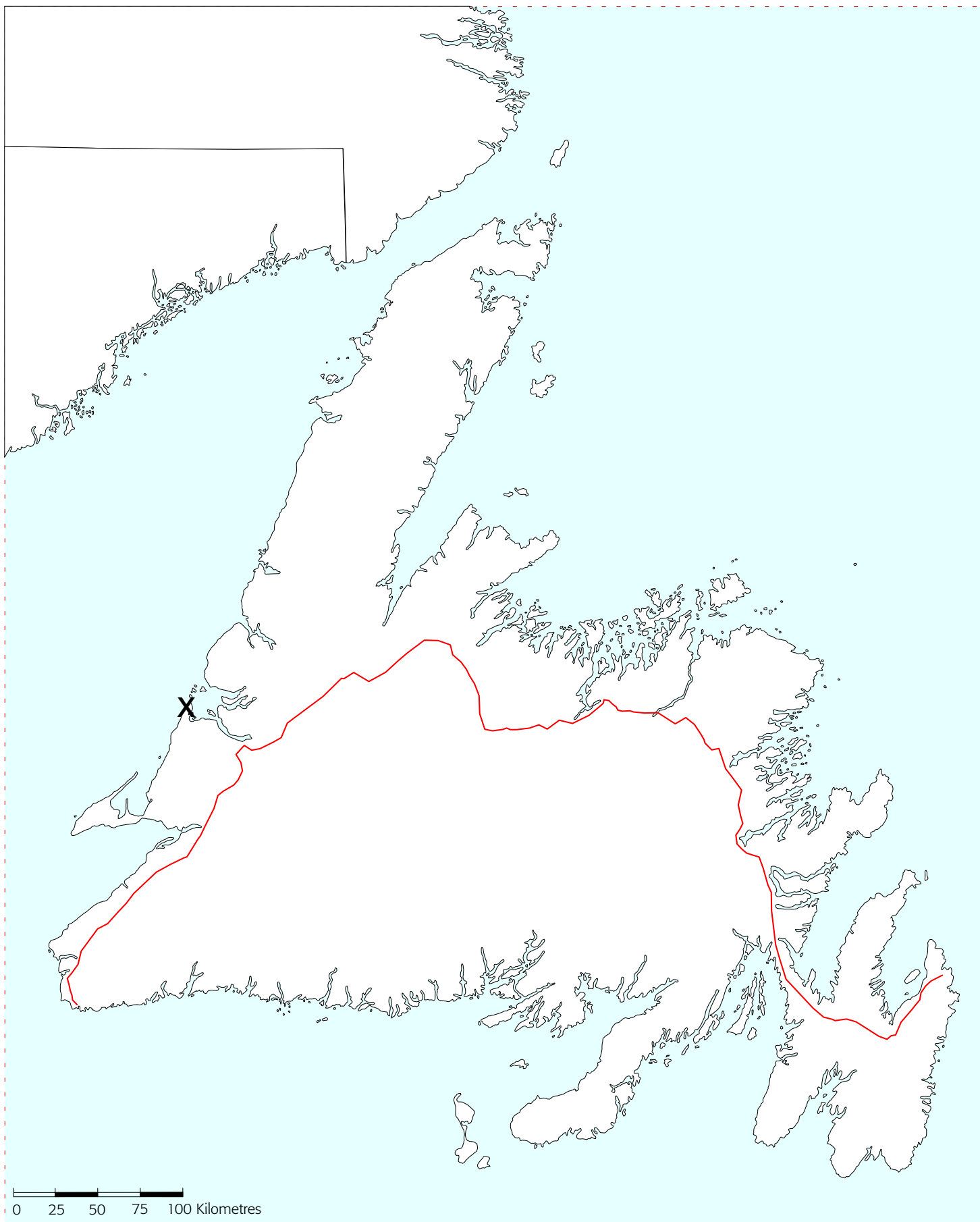
**Part H** Locate and label the location of the *MSC Baltic III*.

**Part I** Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★



Newfoundland &amp; Labrador







# NATIONAL BATTERED BY THE SEA

—A YEAR LATER, FREIGHTER STILL AGROUND ON NEWFOUNDLAND COAST

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which port did the *Baltic III* last call at and what was its destination?
- a) Montreal / Corner Brook                      b) Boston / Channel-Port aux Basques  
c) Toronto / Halifax                                d) Quebec City / Gander  
e) New York / St. John's
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who rescued the crew from the *Baltic III*?
- a) a Coast Guard helicopter                      b) volunteers from the Bay of Islands Search and Rescue  
c) a U.S. Navy destroyer                            d) a Coast Guard patrol vessel  
e) a RCAF helicopter
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. After the *Baltic III*'s crew was rescued, the next priority was to:
- a) remove all 470 containers                      b) remove the fuel oil  
c) repair the holes in the ship's hull              d) salvage the containers with valuable cargo  
e) compensate residents who could not fish

B. Mark the statements T (True) or F (False). If a statement is True, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is False, write the words that make it true on the line below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. **True or False?** The Mediterranean Shipping Company owns and operates the *Baltic III*.

\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. **True or False?** Most of the containers on the *Baltic III* were empty.

\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. **True or False?** All *Baltic III* crew members were rescued without injury.

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.

7. The *Baltic III* is about as long as \_\_\_\_\_ football fields.

8. The *Baltic III* ran aground on Newfoundland's \_\_\_\_\_ coast.

9. When a ship loses power, this is known as "loss of \_\_\_\_\_."

D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. (Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)

10. As you see it, who should be responsible for the rescue, clean up, and salvage of the *Baltic III*? Who should be compensated for any damage caused by the wreck? Give reasons to support your response.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# SETTING A PURPOSE BEFORE READING

There are a number of reasons we read, and setting a purpose for reading – knowing WHY we are reading – helps us to focus on important information and to better understand and remember what we read. It also helps us decide HOW we will read the text.

We don't read all texts for the same purposes or in the same way. For example, we read an instruction manual for a new Blu-ray player for a different reason than we read a book or a website. How we will read it – the strategies we use – will also differ. We are more likely to skim to find the information we need in a manual. Once we find what we need, we might read the instructions carefully to figure out what to do. Then, we stop reading, put the manual down, and carry out the steps. We may have to reread if we get confused or forget what to do.

This is a very different approach than the one we would use to read a book. When we read a book, we usually read cover-to-cover. We read carefully so we don't miss any details because we want to understand the whole story. Sometimes we make connections or create images in our minds as we read to help us better understand what we are reading. Depending on its length, we may put the book down before we finish reading it but we will start reading where we left off.

Good readers are flexible and responsive. This means that they match their reading strategies to their purpose for reading. What types of text do you read? Why do you read them? What strategies do you use to read each of these texts? The chart below is a summary of the main purposes for reading and what each entails.

Purpose for reading	What it looks like
For enjoyment	Usually student-selected. Allows students to choose a variety of genres and forms. Allows students to pursue what interests them while developing reading skills.
To experience something new	Students make connections between their personal experiences and those of people around the world.
To learn more about themselves and others	Students reflect on what they've read and express opinions and perspectives. Students develop a sense of their personal values and make sense of the world around them.
To gain information	Students use the features of informational texts to gather, analyse and apply what they've learned.
To understand issues	Students develop a sense of perspective. Students pose questions, acknowledge other points of view, critique the opinions presented and support opinions with evidence.
To appreciate writing	Students respond to text in ways other than written answers to apply what they've learned in new contexts.
To appreciate use of media to communicate	Students respond to a variety of media formats (e.g., infographics, political cartoons, videos, etc.) and react to how the format supports the meaning of the message.

\* Chart adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4-6, p. 11.

**ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students' responses holistically.

	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Extending</b>
<b>Supports thinking</b>	Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.	Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence.
<b>Shows understanding</b>	Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message.	Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the 'so what'.
<b>Thinks critically</b>	Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling.	Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical.	Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T). Inferences are plausible.	Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W). Inferences are plausible and insightful.



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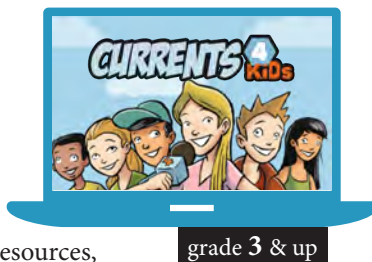
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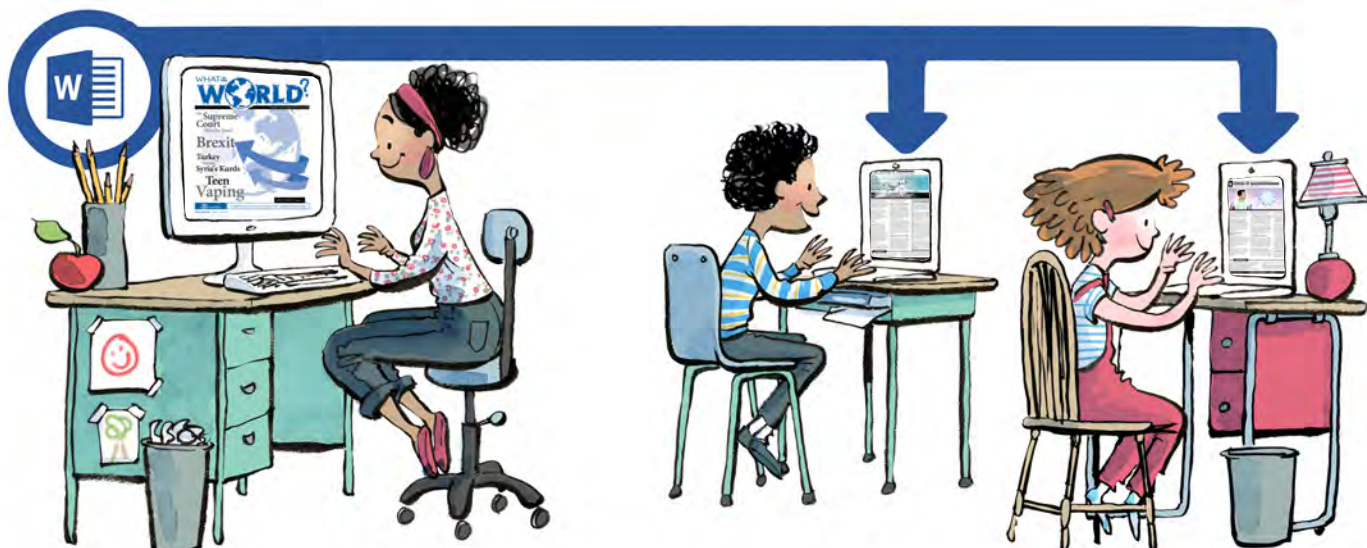
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# Students Can Work In Word/Google Docs...



## Did you know...

... that each issue of *What In The World?* includes a PDF file (complete document) and a **Word** file (articles and questions only).

Students can complete assignments directly in the **Word** file. Teachers can email the file to students or post it on the Internet. The **Word** file also allows teachers to:

- easily modify and format content including changing **fonts** and **text** sizes
- create a PDF document and use **Adobe Reader's** 'Read Out Loud Mode'
- save paper and copying costs and help protect the environment
- promote and encourage students' computer skills

## Data in the Word file

There are **three** ways to access data from a **Word** file:

- 1) Select the data you wish to **Copy** and then **Paste** it into any word processing program. Use **Select All** to copy the entire document.
- 2) Import the entire **Word** file into **LibreOffice** (or another similar program) and then save as a new file.
- 3) Create a new file in a different format. Use the **Word Save As** command to choose: 1) plain text, 2) rich text format (RTF), 3) Web page (.htm), 4) PDF, etc.

## Google Docs and LibreOffice

- You can easily upload the **Word** file to **Google Docs** and share it with students or other teachers.
- You can translate a **Google Docs** file into another language (see *Tools>Translate document*) but you will need to edit the document to suit your requirements. **Google Docs** can translate into over 100 languages including Spanish, Mandarin, and German.
- **LibreOffice** is a free alternate to **Microsoft Office** and offers the same functionality. It's easy to install and use. See: [www.libreoffice.org](http://www.libreoffice.org)

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