

**READING** Read the text and decide if the sentences below are TRUE or FALSE.

A steward came hurrying and sprinkled water on the table cloth between the plates. The excitement subsided. Most of the passengers continued with their meal. A small number, including Mrs Renshaw, got carefully to their feet and threaded their ways with a kind of concealed haste between the tables and through the doorway.

‘Well,’ the purser said, ‘there she goes.’ He glanced around with approval at the reminder of his **flock** who were sitting quiet, looking complacent, their faces reflecting that extraordinary pride that travellers seem to take in being recognised as ‘good sailors.

’ When the eating was finished and the coffee had been served, Mr Botibol, who had been unusually grave and thoughtful since the rolling started, suddenly stood up and carried his cup of coffee around to Mrs Renshaw’s vacant place, next to the purser. He seated himself in the chair, then immediately leaned over and began to whisper urgently in the purser’s ear. ‘Excuse me,’ he said, ‘but could you tell me something, please?’

The purser, small and fat and red, bent forward to listen. ‘What’s the trouble, Mr Botibol?’

‘What I want to know is this.’ The man’s face was anxious and the purser was watching it. ‘What I want to know is will the captain already have made his estimate on the day’s run—you know, for the auction pool? I mean before it began to get rough like this.’

The purser, who had prepared himself to receive personal a confidence, smiled and leaned back in his seat to relax his full belly. ‘I should say so—yes,’ he answered. He didn’t bother to whisper his reply, although automatically he lowered his voice, as one does when answering a whisper.

‘About how long ago do you think he did it?’ ‘Some time this afternoon. He usually does it in the afternoon.’

‘About what time?’

‘Oh, I don’t know. Around four o’clock I should guess.’

‘Now tell me another thing. How does the captain decide which number it shall be? Does he take a lot of trouble over that?’

The purser looked at the anxious frowning face of Mr Botibol and he smiled, knowing quite well what the man was driving at. ‘Well, you see, the captain has a little conference with the navigating officer, and they study the weather and a lot of other things, and then make their estimate.’

Mr Botibol nodded, pondering this answer for a moment. Then he said, ‘Do you think the captain knew there was bad weather coming today?’

‘I couldn’t tell you,’ the purser replied. He was looking into the small black eyes of the other man, seeing the two single little specks of excitement dancing in their centres. ‘I really couldn’t tell you, Mr Botibol. I wouldn’t know.’

'If this gets any worse it might be worth buying some of the low numbers. What do you think?' The whispering was more urgent, more anxious now.

'Perhaps it will,' the purser said. 'I doubt whether *the old man* allowed for a really rough night. It was pretty calm this afternoon when he made his estimate.'

1. The plot is set on an airplane. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mr Botibol wanted to know what the captain predictions are. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The word *flock* (line 5) refers to birds. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The purser didn't know if the captain had made estimates. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The purser didn't know if the captain had taken weather into consideration.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The phrase *the old man* (the penultimate line) refers to the captain. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Mr Botibol feels at ease with the situation. \_\_\_\_\_