

The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald

As the antagonist in the Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, the environment not only claims the ship but the lives of the people as well.

The Storm

The storm plays a key role in the theme, setting, mood and plot. The story builds with the raging storm, creating a very dynamic and exciting ballad. The storm is personified as the “witch of November” (Lightfoot, line 20), which gives it the impression of being alive and having evil power.

SS Edmund Fitzgerald

Admired as “the Queen of the Lakes”, the Edmund Fitzgerald remains the longest ship to sink in Lake Superior. The steam ship was lost on November 10, 1975 along with its crew of 29 men.

Lake Superior

Lake Superior is the largest of the Great Lakes, with a length of 563 km. It has claimed over 200 ships. The lake is referred to as an “ice-water mansion” (Lightfoot, line 42) describing its freezing depths.

The Sinking

While the exact cause for the ship’s sinking remains unknown, the environment was a key factor. When “The captain wired in he had water comin’ in” (Lightfoot, line 34) the lake had made its claim on the ship.

Conquering Nature

For centuries, humans have tried to conquer nature, but the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald demonstrates nature’s relentlessness. People will struggle against all odds to withstand the force of nature, but are often unsuccessful.





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