

The Hindenburg

precautions

Precautions are actions taken ahead of time to guard against dangers or mistakes.

hydrogen

Hydrogen is a gas that has no color or smell and burns easily.

flammable

Flammable means that something burns easily.

rigid airship

A rigid airship is a vehicle that travels in the air. It floats by means of balloons or gasbags. The ship is rigid, or unbendable, because it has a frame.

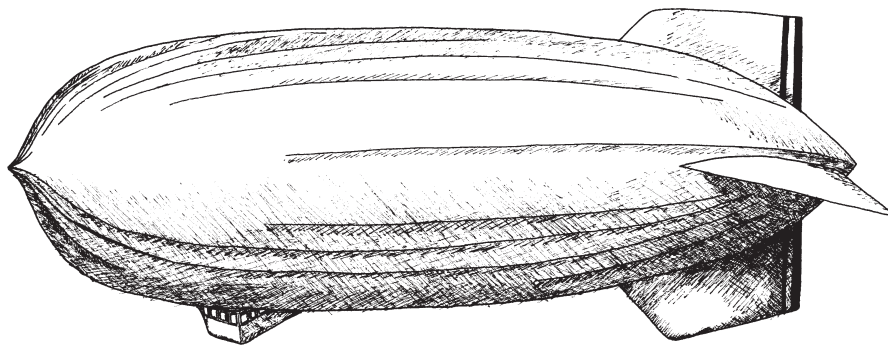
Can you imagine an **aircraft** the size of three football fields? The German-built Hindenburg was a **rigid airship** that was almost that long. Its **massive frame**, made of mostly **aluminum** and **copper**, measured over 803 feet long and 135 feet in **diameter**. Sixteen **gasbags** held the more than seven million **cubic feet** of **flammable hydrogen** gas needed to lift the ship into the air.

The **designer** wanted to fill the Hindenburg with **helium**, not hydrogen. Helium is much safer because it is not flammable. At the time, only the United States made helium. But due to **political** problems, the Germans could not buy helium from the United States. So hydrogen filled the Hindenburg's gasbags instead.

The Germans knew using hydrogen could cause the Hindenburg to come to a **fiery** end. So they took care to prevent such a **disaster**. A special **gel lined** the gasbags to reduce the **risk** of leaks. And the crew checked the gasbags often for leaks. The crew even wore spark-**resistant** boots when walking in the padded

catwalks. Even the passengers had to follow a number of rules in order to make the Hindenburg safe. They had to give up their lighters and matches and smoke only in a fireproof smoking room. A lighter in the middle of the smoking room **provided** passengers with the only way to light their cigarettes. All of these **precautions**, however, could not save the Hindenburg.

On May 3, 1937, the Hindenburg left Germany on its way to America. While **on board**, the passengers traveled **in style**. They ate in a fancy dining room and looked out over the ocean from the **observation deck**. Just after 7:00 p.m. on May 6, it was finally time to land. Suddenly, while hundreds of people watched, the Hindenburg burst into flames, killing about 35 of the near 100 people on board and one person on the ground. In less than a minute, the Hindenburg burned completely. After the Hindenburg disaster, travel by rigid airship came to an end.



words read _____

words read _____

- errors _____ = _____
cold score

- errors _____ = _____
hot score expression date passed

The Hindenburg

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of this story?
 - a. People took great care to make the Hindenburg safe, but its last flight ended in disaster.
 - b. The Hindenburg disaster marked the end of travel by rigid airship.
 - c. The Hindenburg was a German-made rigid aircraft that was the size of three football fields.

Recalling a fact

2. What was in the Hindenburg's gasbags?
 - a. aluminum
 - b. helium
 - c. hydrogen

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **frame** mean in this story?
 - a. accuse or blame
 - b. doorway
 - c. inside structure

Making connections within the text

4. Why were the catwalks padded?
 - a. to prevent a spark from starting a fire
 - b. to add beauty to the Hindenburg
 - c. to make it easier to walk on them

Connecting author's ideas with reader's ideas

5. What may have contributed to the Hindenburg disaster?

Summarizing information

9. Write three facts from the story that support this statement: People took many precautions to make the Hindenburg safe.

Developing vocabulary

6. A synonym is a word that has the same meaning as another word. Match each word with its synonym.

1. risk	a. ___ burning
2. massive	b. ___ planner
3. fiery	c. ___ danger
4. provided	d. ___ huge
5. designer	e. ___ supplied

Attending to details

7. Fill in each blank with a bold-faced word from the story.
 The _____ of the Hindenburg wanted to use a safe gas. Instead, the Hindenburg's gasbags were filled with _____. The gas they used was very _____. Because of this unsafe gas, the Hindenburg came to a _____ end. Many of the people _____ died, and travel by rigid airship ended.

Processing information

8. Why were so many people watching the Hindenburg land?

Enrichment Activity

Dirigibles and blimps are airships that look like balloons and are filled with a gas. Read about dirigibles and blimps, and write what type of gas is used to fill them and how they are used today.