The PQ.17 Tragedy
Alan Harvie, Engineer, and John “Sarge” Ransome, Deck Department

Student Worksheet

Historical Context:
The “Murmansk Run” refers to the shipping route used by the Allies during World War II to deliver supplies to the Soviet front. The route stretched from ports in North America and Great Britain around Iceland and through the Arctic waters of the Barents Sea to the Soviet ports of Murmansk and Archangel. These merchant ships, carrying machinery, equipment, ammunition, food, and supplies for the defense of the Soviet Union, were vulnerable to attack by German U-boats (submarines) patrolling the waters of the North Atlantic.

The merchant ships traveled in convoys with protection from armed escort vessels. Convoys bound for the Soviet Union were named PQ; those returning were designated QP. Listen to Alan Harvie and John “Sarge” Ransome as they recount their perilous experiences aboard the SS Honomu sailing in the PQ 17 Convoy on the Murmansk Run.

Instructions:
Answer the questions on these two pages using the accompanying primary sources found at: http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/oral_histories/maritime_voices/harvie.htm.

These questions are based on the accompanying primary sources. They are designed to help you practice working with historical documents. Some of these documents have been edited, but all are authentic. As you analyze the documents, take into account the source of each document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.

Questions:
1. According to the recorded statements of Alan Harvie and John Ransome and referring to at least one supporting primary source, what was the “Murmansk Run” and why was it so dangerous? Cite your evidence.

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2. According to recorded statements of Alan Harvie and John Ransome, what happened to them as a result of the order to scatter the convoy?

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3. Based on the recorded statements of Alan Harvie and John Ransome, and referring to at least one supporting primary source, state 3 conditions aboard the raft that would reduce the likelihood of Harvie and Ransome’s survival.

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