C1-C2 English Worksheet

SS United States: From Record-Breaking Ocean Liner to the World's Largest Artificial Reef

13 November 2026

Article

On 11 November 2026, the SS United States was deliberately submerged off Florida, trading a celebrated place in maritime history for an unprecedented role on the seabed. The 990-foot liner set a transatlantic speed record on its maiden voyage in 1952, but growing air travel ended its passenger service in 1969. Over subsequent decades, ambitious proposals to revive the vessel failed to get off the ground. As the ship fell into disrepair, rising maintenance costs made the preservation campaign increasingly difficult to keep afloat. Eventually, the possibility of restoring the ship as a floating attraction was effectively ruled out.

Florida's Okaloosa County purchased the liner in 2024 and drew up a plan to convert it into an artificial reef. Crews had to strip out potentially hazardous materials, remove selected historic fittings and carry out extensive preparations before the controlled sinking. Explosives were not used; instead, water entered the structure gradually, allowing it to settle offshore. The descent took longer than forecast. The ship's funnels were saved for a museum, while scientists from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution will monitor how organisms colonise the artificial habitat. It offers a rare chance to study an ecosystem as it takes shape, without assuming immediate environmental benefits.

For supporters, the transformation offers a second life for an otherwise redundant landmark, with possible benefits for wildlife, scientific research and the local diving economy. Critics question whether a symbol of national achievement should give way to a tourist attraction beneath the waves. The argument does not simply come down to nostalgia versus progress: it involves public expenditure, environmental uncertainty and the meaning of preservation itself. When we weigh up a disused building, a derelict railway or an ageing monument, should we prioritise its original function, its physical survival or the possibility of imaginative reuse?

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

No.	Statement	T / F
1	Rather than being lost accidentally, the liner was intentionally submerged.	
2	The ship set its historic speed record only after being withdrawn from service.	
3	The growth of air travel had no connection to its declining passenger business.	
4	Repeated proposals for a different use failed before the reef project.	
5	The ship was submerged with its potentially harmful materials still on board.	
6	Selected components were kept for a museum rather than sent to the seabed.	
7	Scientists intend to observe how the new marine community develops.	
8	The article treats the environmental and economic benefits as already proven.	

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. get off the ground	A. deteriorated through lack of maintenance
2. fell into disrepair	B. develops into a recognisable form
3. keep afloat	C. dismissed as a possibility
4. ruled out	D. perform planned work or instructions
5. drew up	E. be reduced to one essential issue
6. strip out	F. enable a project to survive financially
7. carry out	G. remove unwanted parts or materials completely
8. takes shape	H. prepared a formal plan or document
9. give way to	I. begin operating successfully
10. come down to	J. be replaced by something else

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. celebrated	A. spending
2. subsequent	B. obsolete
3. hazardous	C. restore
4. extensive	D. following
5. colonise	E. dangerous
6. redundant	F. abandoned
7. expenditure	G. comprehensive
8. derelict	H. inventive
9. imaginative	I. renowned
10. revive	J. populate

Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Which historic structure or vehicle has left the strongest impression on you?	1. Does deliberately sinking a celebrated ocean liner preserve its legacy or symbolically erase it?
2. Have you ever regretted throwing away something that later seemed valuable?	2. At what point does the expense of restoration become impossible to justify?
3. What is the most creative example of repurposing a building or object you have encountered?	3. Could converting abandoned industrial buildings into homes ease housing shortages without erasing local identity?
4. Would you rather explore the liner underwater or visit it as a restored museum?	4. Should artificial reefs be judged primarily by scientific evidence rather than projected tourism revenue?
5. How do you react when a familiar local landmark is demolished?	5. Is it ethical to transform public heritage mainly to generate commercial income?
6. Are you more drawn to places with a long history or newly designed spaces?	6. What matters most in preserving history: the physical original, accurate archives or public access?
7. Have you ever supported a local preservation or restoration project?	7. Can giving something a new purpose destroy the very qualities that made it valuable?
8. Which obsolete technology would you most like to see given a second life?	8. What responsibilities do future generations have towards industrial landmarks built by their predecessors?

Answer Key

True/False	1=T, 2=F, 3=F, 4=T, 5=F, 6=T, 7=T, 8=F
Phrase Match	1=I, 2=A, 3=F, 4=C, 5=H, 6=G, 7=D, 8=B, 9=J, 10=E
Synonym Match	1=I, 2=D, 3=E, 4=G, 5=J, 6=B, 7=A, 8=F, 9=H, 10=C

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	Several ambitious restoration proposals failed to get off the ground.
2	The abandoned hotel fell into disrepair when its owners stopped maintaining it.
3	Local donations made the museum restoration project easier to keep afloat.
4	Inspectors ruled out reopening the old bridge without major repairs.
5	Architects drew up plans for a new public square.
6	Engineers had to strip out unsafe materials before reopening the factory.
7	Specialists carry out detailed checks before a vessel is deliberately sunk.
8	A new coastal ecosystem takes shape over several years.
9	The abandoned warehouse may give way to new housing.
10	The decision may come down to safety rather than appearance.