This is a summary of what happened at the sinking of the “William Brown.” The first mate who is in charge of the Longboat which is over-crowded and in danger of sinking orders the seamen, including Holmes, to throw people out of the boat to keep it from sinking. If you were Holmes what do you think you should do? Why? How do you think you would act if you followed Kant’s ethics? How do you think you would act if you followed a utilitarian ethics?

**Sinking and rescue[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=William_Brown_(ship)&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Sinking and rescue)]**

Under the command of Captain George Harris, the ship departed from [Liverpool](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liverpool) on March 18, 1841 for [Philadelphia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia) with 17 seamen and 65 passengers, mostly poor Scottish and Irish emigrants. At about 10 p.m. on the night of April 19, the *William Brown* struck an [iceberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceberg) 250 miles (400 km) southeast of [Cape Race](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Race), [Newfoundland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Newfoundland) and sank. The captain, eight seamen, and one passenger made it to the [jolly boat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jolly_boat) (to be picked up six days later by a French fishing vessel), while nine crewmen and 32 passengers occupied the [longboat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longboat). One person had died earlier on the voyage, so 31 passengers, many of them children, went down with the ship.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29#cite_note-BCLC-1)

Before the two boats parted ways to increase their chances of being found, Captain Harris placed the [first mate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_mate), Francis Rhodes, in charge of the crowded, leaking longboat. At about 10 p.m., 24 hours after the sinking, the wind picked up, sending water over the longboat's [gunwales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunwale), and it began to rain heavily. The first mate shouted, "This . . . won't do. Help me, God. Men, go to work."[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29#cite_note-BCLC-1) When the crewmen did nothing, he stated, "Men, you must go to work, or we shall all perish."[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29#cite_note-BCLC-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29#cite_note-LL-2) Then, the seamen, among them Alexander Holmes, forced 12 men out of the boat. Two women also went into the frigid water, though they may have voluntarily followed their brother, Frank Askin. Early the next morning, two men were found to be hiding and were also jettisoned. All of the male passengers, except for two married men and a young boy, had been sacrificed,[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-BCLC-1) while all of the crewmen remained aboard. Later that day, the survivors were picked up by the *Crescent* and taken to [Le Havre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Havre).

**Trial[**[**edit**](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=William_Brown_(ship)&action=edit&section=2)**]**

When some of the passengers finally reached their destination of Philadelphia, they filed a complaint with the District Attorney. Holmes was the only crewman to be found in the city, so he was the only one charged. He was accused of murdering Frank Askin. A [grand jury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_jury), [Henry Baldwin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Baldwin), refused to [indict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indictment) him on that charge, so it was reduced to manslaughter. In the case of *United States v. Holmes*, the defendant was found guilty and sentenced to six months in jail and a $20 fine.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brown_%28ship%29#cite_note-LL-2) None of the other crewmen were ever brought to trial.