

2008

Lifeboat

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Recommended Citation

Slesinger, Warren. "Lifeboat." *The Iowa Review* 38.1 (2008): 58-58. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6407>

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Lifeboat (lyfe.boht) n-s 1. A small boat for saving lives at sea with a centerboard, two or more sets of oars, and a rudder; its capacity depends on the ratio of men to women and children, and its safety on the height of the waves and the strength of the wind: a dazzling white *lifeboat* with "America the Beautiful" stenciled on the side. 2. A means of escape in a crisis. See *lifeboat ethics*. 3. The situation of someone fortunate enough to find a seat in a *lifeboat* surrounded by splashing, sputtering people too numerous to be taken on board, the occupants cursing and clubbing the knuckles that clutch the side. See *Third World*.