

SEARCHING FOR TITANIC

VIDEO

GO TO
WEB VIEW

VOCABULARY

voyage: a long trip by sea or through space

wreck: a car, plane, or ship that has been badly damaged or destroyed

plunged: fell or dropped suddenly

discouraged: not having hope or confidence

debris: pieces of something that has been broken or destroyed

FOR THE

MIC

Could the most famous shipwreck in history ever be found? BY LAUREN TARSHIS

It was April 14, 1912.

The *Titanic* sped across the Atlantic Ocean. The sky glittered with stars. The sea was as still as glass.

This was the *Titanic's* first **voyage**, but already the ship was famous. It was big, beautiful, and built from the strongest steel. Many believed it to be “unsinkable.”

Until . . . disaster struck.

At 11:40 p.m., the *Titanic* hit a massive iceberg. The ship's thick metal side tore open, and icy seawater rushed in. The *Titanic* was doomed. There weren't enough lifeboats for everyone on board. More than 1,500 people died.

Less than three hours later, the *Titanic* disappeared into the black waters of the North Atlantic Ocean. Would it ever be seen again?



PAUSE AND THINK: Why did the *Titanic* sink?



Beyond Reach

The news of the *Titanic* disaster shocked the world. People wanted the ship to be found. Some families hoped their loved ones had survived inside the **wreck**.

But the *Titanic* was at the bottom of the ocean, under more than 2 miles of water. No person could survive in water so deep—even if they had air to breathe.

That's because of water pressure, the force of water pushing against the body from all directions. As water gets deeper, water pressure increases. Lungs can't breathe. Blood can't flow. Hearts can't beat.

For this reason, humans had never explored the deep sea—and so the *Titanic* seemed lost forever.



PAUSE AND THINK: What is water pressure?

The *Titanic* as it set sail



WELCOME TO THE TITANIC The ship's richest travelers used a grand staircase like this one. Guests were amazed by its carved wood and other details.

Human-Sized Worms

As time went by, new inventions helped make ocean exploration possible. In 1960, two scientists climbed into a tiny submarine called a "submersible" and traveled 7 miles down in the Pacific Ocean.

The men couldn't see much in the nearly pitch-black depths of the ocean, but their strong submersible kept them safe. They made it back to the surface alive—and inspired many people.

One of those inspired people was Robert Ballard. He grew up to become an oceanographer—a scientist who studies the sea. By the late 1970s, Ballard had spent more time in submersibles than any other human. He found astonishing wonders, including eyeless fish and



Robert Ballard

SHIP OF



TAKE A SWIM The *Titanic* was one of the first ships to have a pool on board. Passengers passed time by swimming laps in the heated water.

human-sized worms, on his undersea journeys.

But there was something Ballard especially wanted to find: the *Titanic*.



PAUSE AND THINK: What does an oceanographer do?

Deep Underwater

In 1977, Ballard and a small team set out for the North Atlantic to search for the *Titanic*. Hopes were high. But only days into the voyage, a huge piece of Ballard's ship **plunged** into the sea, forcing the team to return home.

Ballard wanted to try again, but it was difficult to get the money he would need for another attempt. Instead, he decided to concentrate on a different goal.

For years, Ballard had wanted to create a safer, more effective way to explore the deep sea. Submersibles allowed scientists like Ballard to go

deep underwater—but the trips were dangerous, and the submersibles could stay down for only a few hours at a time.

Ballard wanted to build a remote-controlled submersible that would carry cameras, not people, deep underwater. His invention would take pictures and videos that scientists could watch from a ship above.



PAUSE AND THINK: What problems did regular submersibles have?

A New Tool

Even as Ballard and his team worked on the new submersible—which they called *Argo*—Ballard continued to think about the *Titanic*. In 1984, he decided to make another attempt to find the shipwreck.

On August 24, 1985, Ballard and his team were once again on a ship in the North Atlantic—

DREAMS



A FEAST AT EVERY MEAL Guests enjoyed 10-course meals in a beautiful dining room while live music played. Expensive foods like oysters and steak were on the menu.



SNOOZE IN STYLE The fanciest cabins, or rooms, cost \$100,000 in today's money! They had running water—which most ships didn't have in 1912.





SUPER SUBMERSIBLE To search for the *Titanic*, Ballard created a new kind of submersible. He called it *Argo*. It could be controlled from afar and was loaded with cameras and powerful lights.

but this time, they had *Argo*. They sent *Argo* down to the bottom of the ocean. Its cameras clicked.

In a ship above, Ballard and his team watched as images appeared on the screen. *Argo* worked perfectly!

In the coming days, *Argo* took pictures and videos of many marvels, such as huge holes in the sea bottom and plants that could grow without light. But unfortunately, there was no sign of the *Titanic*.



PAUSE AND THINK: How did *Argo* make exploring the ocean easier?

Ship of Dreams

On September 1, 1985, a very **discouraged** Ballard went to his room to rest. Soon he and the team would have to return home. Was this trip to the North Atlantic going to end like the first, in failure?

He had just gotten into bed when he was called back to the control room. On the screen was a huge metal object. Ballard's heart pounded as he realized he was looking at part of the *Titanic*'s engine. They had done it!

Over the following days, Ballard and the team made dazzling discoveries. The most important was that the ship had cracked in half just before it sank. **Debris** was scattered for more than a mile. They found dishes, shoes, and jewels on the seafloor.

But Ballard didn't remove any of those treasures from the ocean floor. He explored the shipwreck of the *Titanic* but left it untouched. He wanted to always honor the memory of the people who had lost their lives on that starlit night in 1912. •



PAUSE AND THINK: Why didn't Ballard take anything from the shipwreck?