

SEARCHING FOR THE *TITANIC*

Can the most famous shipwreck in history ever be found? By Lauren Tarshis

As You Read What obstacles did Robert Ballard face in his search?

On the night of April 14, 1912, the *Titanic* sped across the Atlantic Ocean. The sky glittered with stars. The sea was still. On board were more than 2,200 people. There were bejeweled millionaires and hopeful immigrants, passengers from all over the world.

This was the *Titanic*'s first voyage. But already the ship was world famous. Built from the strongest steel, from the most modern designs, the *Titanic* was said to be unsinkable. Then disaster struck.

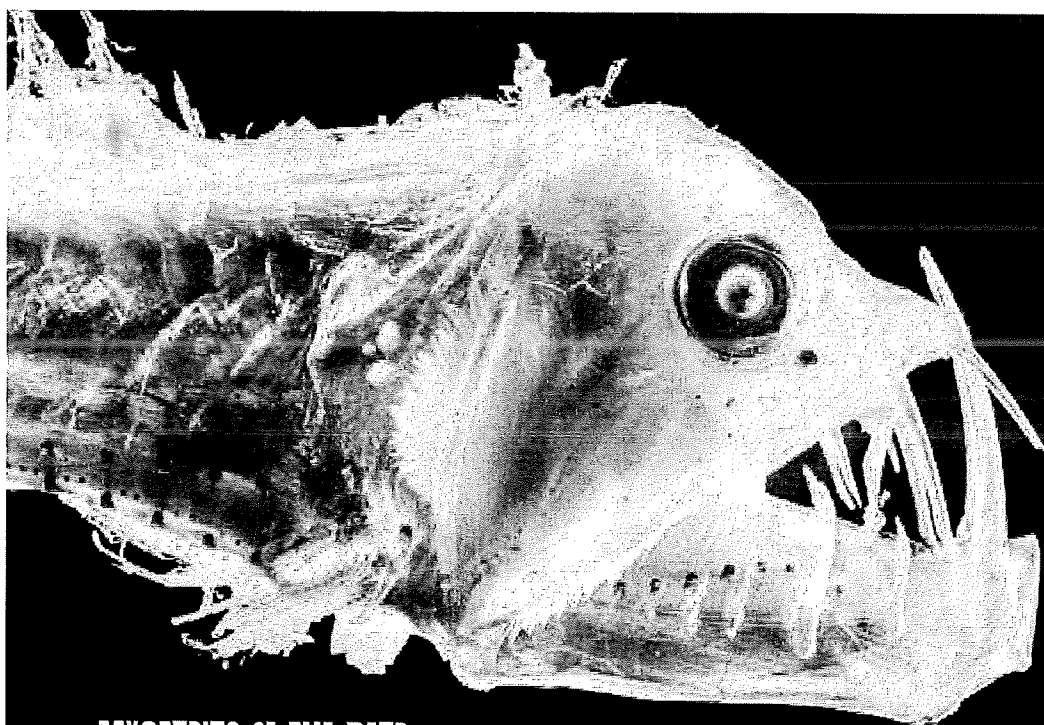
At 11:40 p.m., the *Titanic* hit an iceberg. Icy seawater flooded the ship.

It quickly became clear that the *Titanic* and most of its passengers were doomed.

Two hours and forty minutes later, the magnificent ship disappeared into the inky-black waters of the North Atlantic. Would it ever be seen again?



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MYSTERIES OF THE DEEP

Oceans cover more than two-thirds of our planet, yet we know more about the surface of Mars than we know about the ocean floor. In fact, humans have explored only about 20 percent of Earth's oceans. In recent years, however, new technologies have helped humans explore more of the deep ocean. We've discovered a world of near total darkness, where all sorts of creatures thrive—like this viperfish, which glows in the dark.

images flashed onto TV screens, providing a window into the deep sea.

In the coming days, *Argo* would show deep undersea canyons, giant boulders, and enormous holes in the ocean floor. But mostly the team saw nothing.

The days ticked by. There was no sign of the *Titanic*. Ballard started to panic. The U.S. Navy was paying for this mission. They had provided the ship and equipment. The Navy had given him a strict deadline. Ballard and his team didn't have much time before they'd have to end the search and go home.

Was Ballard's mission going to end in failure yet again?

SHIP OF DREAMS

On September 1, Ballard went to his cabin to try to get some sleep. He was exhausted and deeply discouraged.

But then he was called back to the deck. He hurried to the control room. He found his team studying an image on one of the screens. It appeared to be an enormous metal object covered in rust. Ballard's heart pounded as he realized what he was looking at: one of the *Titanic*'s boilers, a part of the

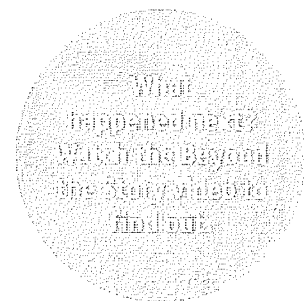
ship's engines. Soon other images appeared. There was a piece of twisted metal, portholes, and a banister.

Cheers erupted.

They had done it.

In the coming days, Ballard and his team made more amazing discoveries. They found that the ship had cracked in half just before it sank. The front part of the ship was a third of a mile away from the back. They found jewels and dishes and shoes scattered across the seafloor. Ballard became world famous.

But in those first exhilarating moments of discovery, a chill ran through his heart. Ballard thought of the people who'd been on board. His mind filled with their voices and their cries. He hadn't found just an empty shipwreck. He'd found the final resting place of a magnificent ship of dreams—and of the hundreds who lost their lives on that starlit night in 1912. ●



Writing Contest

What challenges did Robert Ballard face in his quest to find the *Titanic*? How did he overcome those challenges? Answer both questions in a well-organized essay. Support your ideas with text evidence. Send your essay to **Titanic Contest**. Three winners will each get *Unsinkable* by Gordon Korman.

Entries must be submitted by a legal resident of the U.S. age 18 and older, who is the teacher, parent, or guardian of the student. See page 2 for details.

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