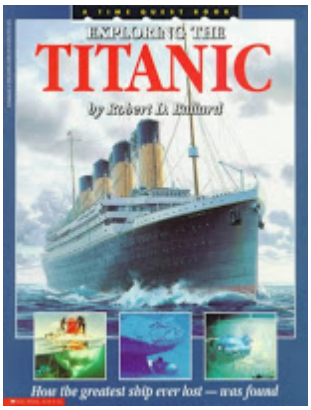
Exploring the Titanic



[1]

Robert Ballard is my hero. Dr. Ballard is a scientist, inventor, and a deep-sea explorer. He is most famous for discovering the wreck of the Titanic, 12,460 feet beneath the sea. The Titanic was the largest ship ever built in her time. She was as tall as an eleven story building and almost four city blocks long. The unique design of her hull was supposed to make her unsinkable, but in the middle of her first voyage the huge ship struck an iceberg and sank in the dark, icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912. Only 705 of the Titanic's 2,223 passengers and crew survived. Ever since the Titanic sank, people have been fascinated with the story and many have wondered about the location of the monster ship on the ocean floor.

Seventy-four years later, Bob Ballard led a team of scientists in a mission to discover the lost Titanic. Using Argo, the deep sea underwater robot craft Dr. Ballard developed, tethered to a research vessel called the Knorr, the team explored the region of the ocean where the ship went down. They tried for weeks to find the Titanic, but without any luck. Then Dr. Ballard thought of a new way to search. He knew that when things fall in deep water, they leave a long tail of debris, like a comet. He hoped that they might find a trail of wreckage from the ship that would lead them to the Titanic. He was right! With only days left to complete their mission, the team discovered a line of man-made objects that led them directly to the Titanic.

You can read the fascinating story of the Titanic and Dr. Ballard's search for her wreck in the book he wrote titled Exploring the Titanic [2]. I love the photos and illustrations in this book. I especially like the paintings by illustrator Ken Marschall and the way he compares pictures of the objects when they were new to how they appear now, covered in rust formations at the bottom of the sea.

Though Dr. Ballard is best known for locating the wreck of the Titanic, he is most proud of a different scientific discovery. In 1977 he was part of a team that explored hydrothermal vents near the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador. This part of the ocean is so deep, no one thought life existed there. The scientists were shocked to discover giant clams, white crabs, pink fish with blue eyes, and red tube worms that were eight feet long. These creatures were depending on tiny bacteria that thrive in hydrogen sulfide, a chemical compound that came out of the vents at the bottom of the sea. This discovery was important because they

were the first creatures known to science that did not depend on light from the sun.

Dr. Ballard has enjoyed a lot of success but it has not always been easy. Sometimes people laughed at his ideas and said they would never work. In spite of many disappointments in his life, Bob Ballard never stopped believing in himself. He never gave up. He uses his knowledge and some very creative thinking to do incredible things. The library has several books about Dr. Ballard and his career. Deep-Sea Explorer: The Story of Robert Ballard, Discoverer of the Titanic [3] by Rick Archbold is intended for readers age 12 and older. Exploring the Bismarck [4] by Robert D. Ballard is the story of the real-life quest to find Hitler's most famous battleship. Dr. Ballard's books about the Bismarck and the Titanic are recommended for readers aged 8 and older.

You can find more information about Dr. Ballard at many sites on the internet. You might start at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [5] website. Or check out the video below **Robert Ballard:Exploring the Ocean's Hidden Worlds**.

Oh, the Thinks You Can Think[6]Exploring the Titanic [7]History [8]

Posted by Mary F. on Jul 20, 2010

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Links:
[1] http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_5OoF7eXn3dw/TEXNQ3rCoqI/AAAAAAAAABs/88NG7R71P1o/s1600/Titanic.aspx.jpeg
[2] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?isbn=0590419528
[3] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?isbn=0590472321
[4] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?isbn=0590442686
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