

Searching for the *Titanic*

How Robert Ballard discovered the most famous shipwreck in history

About the Story

Lexile:920L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to identify key ideas in a nonfiction article about the search for the *Titanic* and to write a short essay

Key Skills: cause and effect, author's craft, key ideas and details, problem and solution, compare and contrast

Essential Questions:

- What drives human exploration?
- What is our relationship with the ocean?
- How does technology shape our understanding of the world?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Video:

- Beyond the Story: Searching for the *Titanic*

Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Slideshow: Journey to the *Titanic*
- Text-to-speech

Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

Recommended pairings from the Scope archives:

- "Would You Visit the *Titanic*?"
- "Grammar's Monsters of the Deep"
- *Into the Deep*
- "Vanished"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Finding the *Titanic*
- Video Discussion Questions
- Nonfiction Elements*
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing*, Text Features, Text Structure, Text Evidence*
- Choice Board
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read 20 minutes

Do-Now: Preview Text Features (5 minutes)

- Have students open to pages 4-5 of the magazine or go to the top of the digital story page. Then ask them to examine the illustration, headline, and subheading. Invite students to share what they know about the *Titanic* disaster. *Remote learning tip: Invite students to share their thoughts in the chat feature or on a digital whiteboard like Jamboard.*

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard, or if you're remote, share it on your screen. Review the definitions as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the practice activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *bioluminescent, demise, gleaned, opulent, plumes, poignant, prevail*

2. Reading and Discussing 45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 5 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the story once through as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article with students who may need it.*) Optionally, have students listen to author Lauren Tarshis read the story while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again and respond to the following close-reading questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat room; you can also use the questions as an asynchronous assignment.*

Close-Reading Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What effect did the *Titanic*'s sinking have on the public in 1912? Why are so many people fascinated by the *Titanic* to this day?** (cause and effect) *In 1912, the public was shocked by the sinking of the *Titanic*. It was the biggest moving object ever constructed, built from the strongest steel and using the most modern design—it was said to be unsinkable. Robert Ballard and so many others remain fascinated by the ship today because its sinking was such a tragic and preventable disaster. On its very first voyage, the ship collided with an iceberg that could have been avoided and sank, and 1,500 people lost their lives because of a shortage of lifeboats.*
2. **In the first section of the article and in the photo caption "Mysteries of the Deep," author Lauren Tarshis compares the deep sea to outer space. Why?** (author's craft) *In the first section of the article, Tarshis compares the deep sea to outer space to make the point that at the time of the *Titanic*'s sinking, the deep sea was impossible for humans to reach. In the photo caption "Mysteries of the Deep," Tarshis compares our knowledge of the deep sea to our knowledge of Mars to emphasize how mysterious and unknown the geographical feature that covers most of our planet remains to us.*
3. **What role did technology play in the discovery of the *Titanic*?** (key ideas and details, problem and solution) *Advances in technology such as the development of sonar and submersibles allowed humans to finally capture a glimpse of the deep sea. These inventions inspired a new generation of explorers like Ballard, who created an even better way to explore the deep ocean: a remote-controlled submersible named *Argo*. *Argo* could stay underwater far longer than a manned submersible and could capture images over large underwater areas; it was the creation of *Argo* that led to the discovery of the *Titanic*.*
4. **Ballard did not know exactly where the *Titanic*'s wreck was located. How did he overcome this problem?** (problem and solution) *First, Ballard researched historical records to identify a 100-square-mile area where the wreck was most likely located. He also took a lesson from one of *Argo*'s first test missions, an exploration of two sunken submarines. Ballard located the submarines by following the debris trails they had left on the ocean floor; he realized that the *Titanic*, too, would have left a debris trail, and that he could follow this debris trail to the wreck.*
5. **How did Robert Ballard's and Jack Grimm's quests to find the *Titanic* differ?** (compare and contrast) *Robert Ballard had to secure funding for his searches from outside groups. After \$600,000 worth of borrowed equipment crashed into the sea on his first mission, he worried he wouldn't be able to find support to continue his search. Jack Grimm, on the other hand, was a millionaire who was able to spend his own money on top scientists and the best equipment. Plus,*

Grimm's search for the Titanic seemed to be another "attention-grabbing" quest, while Ballard was motivated not by a desire for fame or praise, but by curiosity and for the sake of exploration.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What does Ballard's quest for the *Titanic* reveal about him as a person? Name three character traits one might use to describe him.** *Answers will vary but will likely be similar to persistent, curious, inventive, dedicated, reverent, etc.*
 2. **Reread the caption titled "*Titanic Treasures*." Do you think objects should have been removed from the wreck of the *Titanic*?** *Answers will vary. Students may say yes, because the Titanic is an important piece of history, and studying the objects helps experts learn more about the ship, the disaster, and the time period—or simply because many people are fascinated by the objects and no one can see them if they are on the seafloor. Others may say no and argue that taking objects from the wreck is disrespectful to those who died.*
 3. **Why do you think humans have a desire to explore the world, and in particular, dangerous places like the deep sea?** *Answers will vary. Students may say that humans explore because we are curious about our world. Another reason could be that we are looking for something in particular, like the Loch Ness Monster or the wreckage of the Titanic. Humans may also be driven to explore because they crave fame and accolades.*
- Assign or show the video "**Beyond the Story: Searching for the *Titanic*,**" which continues the exciting story of Ballard's incredible discovery. Then complete the **Video Discussion Questions** as a class or independently.

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Finding the *Titanic***. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 10 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, which includes a range of ideas and difficulty levels.



Recommended pairings from the *Scope* archives:

Debate: [“Would You Visit the *Titanic*?”](#) (October 2019)

Grammar: [“Grammar’s Monsters of the Deep”](#) (March 2020)

Play/Informational Text: [Into the Deep](#) (March 2018)

Narrative Nonfiction: [“Vanished”](#) (December 2019/January 2020)