

Dr. Robert Ballard Deep-Sea Explorer (1942–)

The date was April 15, 1912. The world had just learned of the tragedy. The largest, most luxurious ship in the world had struck an iceberg and sunk. More than 1,500 people had died. Seventy-three years later, the same ship was in the news again. Buried more than two miles below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean, the Titanic had been found! Dr. Robert Ballard, deep-sea explorer, had discovered it.

Robert Ballard's interest in the sea began as a child. He grew up in California, where he spent many hours exploring the beaches. Robert enjoyed studying sea creatures, scuba diving, and bodysurfing. Robert described the ocean as "a friend and an adventure." Young Robert often imagined himself as a famous ocean explorer.

In the spring of 1955, Robert won a contest to become a summer trainee at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. During his three months at Scripps, Robert cruised with the team along the Pacific Coast. Robert loved to take the most dangerous assignments. One expedition sent him into a major hurricane!

Robert attended the University of California at Santa Barbara where he studied chemistry and **geology**. He continued his studies at the University of Hawaii in **oceanography**. While in Hawaii, Robert worked as a trainer at the Oceanic Institute, teaching dolphins many tricks.

Robert Ballard has led or participated in many underwater expeditions. He's made many of his deep-sea dives in a small, three-person research **submarine** named Alvin. In the early to mid-1970s, Robert explored the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a huge underwater mountain range in the middle of the ocean. In 1979, Robert discovered underwater volcanoes off the coast of Baja California.

Of all Robert's discoveries, his most famous came in 1985, when he and his research team found the wreck of the Titanic. They designed a robot called Jason Jr. The robot entered the Titanic and took pictures of its interior. Robert saw many interesting **artifacts**, such as a copper sink, a hairbrush, and a pair of shoes. Robert left everything as he found it out of respect for those who had died there.

As a result of the Titanic experience, Robert founded the JASON Project. This project allows thousands of students to take part in live exploration through **telepresence**—the art of allowing viewers to observe discoveries via television. During the spring of each year, JASON conducts two weeks of **interactive broadcasts**.

Robert Ballard has spent more than 20 years exploring the least-known regions of our planet—those regions that lie under the water. He has seen more of the ocean floor than anyone alive. Robert Ballard's discoveries have added to our knowledge of the past and present. No one knows where Ballard will go next, but one thing is for sure—he will continue to explore the mysterious and often dangerous depths beneath the waves.

