

# Exploring the TITANIC

Robert D. Ballard

The story of the *Titanic* began before anyone had even thought about building the great ship. In 1898, fourteen years before the *Titanic* sank, an American writer named Morgan Robertson wrote a book called *The Wreck of the Titan*.<sup>1</sup> In his story, the *Titan*, a passenger ship almost identical to the *Titanic*, and labeled “unsinkable,” sails from England headed for New York. With many rich and famous passengers on board, the *Titan* hits an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sinks. Because there are not enough lifeboats, many lives are lost.

The story of the *Titan* predicted exactly what would happen to the *Titanic* fourteen years later. It was an eerie **prophecy** of terrible things to come. **A**

In 1907, nearly ten years after *The Wreck of the Titan* was written, two men began making plans to build a real titanic ship. At a London dinner party, as they relaxed over coffee and cigars, J. Bruce Ismay, president of the White Star Line of passenger ships, and Lord Pirrie, chairman of Harland & Wolff shipbuilders, discussed a plan to build three enormous

## ANALYZE VISUALS

What **details** in the poster emphasize the *Titanic*’s huge size?

**prophecy** (prŏf’ĭ-sē) *n.*  
a prediction of the future

## **A** CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Why do you think Ballard begins his narrative with a reference to *The Wreck of the Titan*?

1. *Titan*: In Greek mythology, the Titans were a race of giants. The word *titanic* has come to be applied to any person or thing of great size or power.