



Legends of the Deep

The oceans have always fascinated sailors and story-tellers. Sometimes, their stories may have been ways of explaining some of the strange creatures that they'd seen. Other times, they might just have been the fanciful ideas of an active mind. Here are some of the more fantastical mysteries of the deepest oceans.

The Bermuda Triangle

Most people have heard terrible tales of the Bermuda Triangle. The idea is actually very recent. It was first mentioned in a magazine article in 1964. The Bermuda Triangle joins Puerto Rico, Bermuda and Miami. It is roughly 500,000 square miles of sea. Tonnes of treasure line the seabed where Spanish galleons sank.

The fact is that there is nothing mystical about the zone. The strong currents in the sea can easily push inexperienced captains off-course. There are often sudden storms which can make navigation almost impossible. The warm water from the coast of Florida quickly evaporates. This makes the water even saltier. This heavier water sinks which can cause deadly whirlpools. An 11,000-tonne tanker disappeared without a trace as recently as 1963.

Davy Jones's Locker

"I'll send you to Davy Jones's locker," is one of the more famous pirate threats in films and books. But did pirates actually say it, and who was Davy Jones? It is thought that Davy Jones was a Welsh pirate (he was actually called David Jones) in the 1630s. He sailed with famous pirates such as William Cobb during the golden age of piracy. In 1636, Jones's ship was taken by the East India Tea Company. He didn't want them to find all of the treasure and arrest him, so he sank his own ship and sent it to the bottom of the ocean. The word locker was used to mean the final resting place of something, so it made sense for pirates to refer to the ocean floor as their locker. Other phrases that pirates used were "I'll see you in Davy Jones's" (often used as a threat) and "He's in Davy's grip!" (meaning somebody was scared stiff).

The Flying Dutchman

The legend of the ghostly crew of the Flying Dutchman has haunted sailors for centuries. Nobody is quite sure how the legend began, but there appear to be two main contenders. In the 1600s, Captain Vanderdecken set out for home from Indonesia. He sailed into an almighty storm off the Cape of Good Hope. He decided to push on when he should have turned back. He fought the storm for 9 weeks but made no progress. He swore to God that he would make it home and was punished for his blasphemy. His ship and its ghostly crew are cursed to sail their final journey for all time.

Another legend begins with Captain Fokke building the fastest ship in the world. He sailed it in record time from Rotterdam to the East Indies. He wasn't satisfied, though, and sold his soul to the devil to make his ship even faster. As part of his curse, his ship vanished when he died. His crew are forced to sail their ship for eternity.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. Why is it referred to as the Bermuda "Triangle"?
2. Why is the area so dangerous?
3. Why was the bottom of the sea referred to as a locker by early sailors?
4. What did Captain Vanderdecken do that was dangerous?
5. Why do you think all of these stories are famous?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- R** For how long did Captain Vanderdecken fight the storm?
- V** Find a word that tells you younger or new captains were more likely to disappear in the Bermuda Triangle.
- V** Which phrase tells you that the large tanker was never seen again?
- R** Which pirate phrase meant that somebody was terrified?
- I** Was David Jones afraid of the East India Tea Company? How do you know?