

3 The Philadelphia Experiment

- A. Read the first paragraph. Find general information (place, time, topic).
 B. Read the whole text. Give a title to each paragraph.
 C. Explain what was said about the warship.
 D. What were the consequences for the sailors?
 E. Rephrase paragraph 5 (l. 22-24) in your own words.
 F. What are the argument and counter-argument given in the last paragraph? What do they show?

The story goes that, during the chaos of World War II, a group of scientists working for the US navy were carrying out an experiment that could have altered the face of the battle completely: they were attempting to make a warship invisible. The warship in question was the USS Eldridge, docked in the Philadelphia Naval Yard, and the experiment supposedly took place in October 1943.

A scientist named Dr Franklin Reno was said to be the mind behind the project, having taken inspiration from Einstein's unified field theory – and according to the legend, it was a success. Not only was the ship rendered invisible, but in subsequent experiments, apparently teleported to another location 200 miles away and back again.

The experiment wasn't without its side-effects, however; sailors were said to have suffered from a range of ailments, including nausea, mental trauma, invisibility and spontaneous combustion. It's even said that some sailors were found partly embedded in the structure of the ship itself.

For its part, the US navy has always denied that the Philadelphia experiment ever took place, but this has merely added to the claims that the incident was covered up. Despite repeated counter-claims that the experiment is a mixture of hoax and misheard information (the navy really were looking at ways of making ships undetectable to magnetic torpedoes at the time, which could have somehow been misinterpreted as 'invisible'), the legend's endured, partly thanks to books like *The Philadelphia Experiment: Project Invisibility*.

The obvious question, though, is if the US navy managed to make a ship invisible so long ago, why hasn't this technology become widespread since? The supporters of the conspiracy would probably argue that the US navy uses invisibility all the time – we just can't see the evidence.



YOUR PROJECTS

1. Create a leaflet for an American high school
 In groups, browse the unit to list all the elements that can help pupils to spot fake news and conspiracies in the media. Illustrate it to make it attractive and give examples to make it more reliable. 

OR

2. Participate in a talk show about "Conspiracy theories"
Groupwork: each member chooses a different role: host / conspiracy theorist / YouTuber who debunks conspiracy theories. Then act out the debate. 