



- Rob:** Hi and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Rob and with me in the studio today is Chris.
- Chris:** Hello there. In this programme we take a story from the news and pick out some interesting vocabulary that you may not have heard before.
- Rob:** Our story this week comes from Italy, where some divers have made a very exciting discovery...
- Chris:** A **shipwreck** has been uncovered which could reveal a lot about the history of humans at sea. Can you tell us what a shipwreck is, Rob?
- Rob:** Sure. It's a ship which has sunk and now lies on the bottom of the sea. I bet you can think of a very famous example, Chris...
- Chris:** Of course, the Titanic must be the world's most famous shipwreck.
- Rob:** Well, before we dive into the details of this story, I've got a question for you which is about shipwrecks.
- Chris:** Ok, let's hear it then.
- Rob:** The United Nations has estimated – or taken a guess at – the number of shipwrecks which lie on the sea bed. How many wrecked ships do you think there are? Is it:
- a) 3000 ships
  - b) 300,000 ships
  - c) 3 million ships
- Chris:** I'll hazard a guess and say...
- Rob:** Well we'll see if you're right at the end of the programme. Whatever the number is, we know that there is one extra ship to be counted which has just been discovered!
- Chris:** An ancient **vessel** – or ship – has been discovered in the Mediterranean Sea near Italy, and it's quite a special find.
- Rob:** Yes, quite a lot of ships have sunk over the years. The Titanic, for example, sank in 1912. This one is quite a lot older than that.

**Chris:** The newly-discovered shipwreck is thought to be two thousand years old.

**Rob:** So how was it discovered after so long? Listen to this first part of a report by BBC correspondent Alan Johnston: what did the Italian fishermen find?

**Insert**

*For years fishermen believed there was something extraordinary lying in the depths off the town of Varazze. They kept finding shards of pottery in their nets. Eventually, a unit of police divers launched a search. And they've just announced the discovery of a cargo ship, which may date back to the last century before Christ.*

**Chris:** So what did the fishermen find, Rob?

**Rob:** They kept finding **shards** – or small pieces – of pottery in their nets. That gave them a clue that there was something down there at the bottom of the sea.

**Chris:** The divers believe that it is a **cargo ship** – that's a ship which carries goods for trade, rather than people.

**Rob:** And this particular cargo ship could be from the time of ancient Rome. It's been very well preserved in mud and stayed **intact** – or in one piece.

**Chris:** That means that it could hold a lot of information about how past civilisations used to trade with one another.

**Rob:** Listen to the second part of Alan Johnston's report and see if you can hear a word which means "completely covered with":

**Insert**

*The unit's spokesman says that what makes this find especially interesting is that the vessel seems to be almost intact. She sank into thick mud, which engulfed and preserved her. The ship is reckoned to have been sailing a well-travelled route between Spain and the coast of what is now central Italy. She was loaded with more than two-hundred clay amphoras that are likely to contain wine, oil and grain.*

**Chris:** That word was "engulfed." As the ship was engulfed, or covered in mud, it's thought that the cargo on board could still be there.

**Rob:** We heard in the report that the vessel was loaded with two hundred **amphoras**, which were large clay jars used to contain wine, oil or grain.

**Chris:** It would be really exciting to find these things on board the ship. So what are they planning to do with it?

**Rob:** They could either study the ship underwater using teams of divers, or they could bring the entire ship back up to the surface.

**Chris:** In the final part of the report, listen out for a phrase which means something is possible to do.

**Insert**

*The divers' spokesman said that study of the vessel could help add to understanding of commercial activity at that time and that it might even be possible to bring the entire ship to the surface. This would, he said, be technically feasible. But it's now up to the Italian authorities to decide whether such a complex and hugely expensive operation should be launched.*

**Rob:** That phrase was "technically feasible." Although they could bring the ship to the surface, it's likely to be very **fragile** after all these years – or easily breakable.

**Chris:** They could also send divers down to **retrieve** the cargo – or get it back – but many people think that when a ship sinks, it should be left where it is.

**Rob:** It's such an exciting discovery, but we'll have to wait and see if it reveals further historical treasures! But we *don't* have to wait for the quiz question. I asked you how many shipwrecks lie on the ocean floor. Was it:

- a) 3000
- b) 300,000
- c) 3 million

**Chris:** And I said 300,000.

**Rob:** And you were wrong! The answer is 3 million ships! We've just got time to recap some of the vocabulary we've heard in today's programme.

**Chris:** The words we heard were:

shipwreck  
vessel  
shards  
intact  
amphoras  
fragile  
retrieve

**Rob:** That's all we have time for today, but do join us again for more 6 Minute English from [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Bye!

**Chris:** Bye!

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>shipwreck</b>	the remains of a ship which has sunk
<b>vessel</b>	a ship or boat
<b>shards</b>	small pieces of broken glass or pottery
<b>intact</b>	complete
<b>amphoras</b>	clay jars used to contain wine, grain or oil
<b>fragile</b>	easily breakable
<b>retrieve</b>	recover, bring back

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