

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World Wa... Study Guide

Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World Wa... by Robert Kurson

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Plot Summary

"Shadow Divers" by Robert Kurson tells the true story of a group of amateur deep sea divers who discover a German World War II era submarine, a U-boat, sunken in the waters off the coast of New Jersey. They soon found that there were no official records listing a sunken sub at that location and set out to determine the identity of the mystery U-boat.

Kurson focuses on the two divers for whom the U-boat becomes something of an obsession, John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, who first meet while exploring the U-boat. Chatterton is a former medic who sees frontline action in Vietnam and eventually becomes a commercial diver with a serious and methodical approach. Kohler is a wild young man who becomes a hard-partying hotshot diver with a club that prizes the collection of undersea loot. The two men, both excellent divers, do not like one another at first, but eventually become close friends who collaborate on diving and researching official records in their mission to identify the sub.

Kurson creates a tense and suspenseful environment as he describes the extreme dangers of deep sea wreck diving, where a diver can easily become entangled in wreckage or panic from the effects of the high pressure. Several colleagues of Chatterton and Kohler die while diving the U-boat, and Chatterton and Kohler themselves have some harrowing close calls.

Over the course of several years, the two friends return to the submarine to look for clues to its identity. In between dives, they travel to Washington, D.C. to explore the records in the National Archives and correspond with other hobbyists and experts on the possible identification of the sub. Their obsession with diving and exploring the submarine damages the personal relationships each diver has with his family and Kurson describes the men's struggle to cope with the upheaval that ensues.

Their research at first points to a small number of subs that were known to have been patrolling along the American East Coast but that had never been accounted for. Eventually, however, their research suggests more and more the possibility that the sub is U-869, which is officially recorded as having been sunk near North Africa. The divers are finally able to confirm the identity after finding a spare parts box on the sub with a metal plate stamped with the U-boat's number.

The divers learn that there is one surviving member of the original crew of U-869, a radioman who was not on its last mission because he became sick as it was preparing to leave port. Using information from this survivor, Kurson recreates the scene as the original commander and crew of U-869 prepare to set out on their last mission.



The Book of Numbers

The Book of Numbers Summary and Analysis

"Shadow Divers" opens as Bill Nagle waits on the dock at Brielle, New Jersey, for a friend to meet him. Nagle is the captain of the Seeker, a charter diving boat that he operates out of Brielle. A former top hand tool salesman, Nagle also becomes an excellent deep sea shipwreck diver as a young man, at a time when the sport is new and much of the modern safety equipment has not yet been developed. Nagle earns a reputation as a top-notch diver and his diving charters business is thriving.

One popular destination of Nagle's diving charters is the wreck of the Andrea Doria, a passenger liner that sinks in 1956 near Nantucket Island after colliding with another ship. Nagle has dived the Andrea Doria many times, gathering artifacts such as teacups and dishware for his large personal collection. He prefers to seek out undiscovered wrecks, however, that offer new opportunities for himself and his clients.

By 1991, Nagle has developed his diving charter business into a successful second career, but he is endangering his own future by his excessive drinking. A bar near the dock called the Harbor Inn is his regular hangout, where he sits for hours drinking whiskey.

Shipwrecks are common places to find fish, Kurson explains, and many of them are discovered by charter fishing boat captains who keep their locations secret from their competitors. The coordinates of these sites are often kept in a captain's private journal, a "book of numbers" as Kurson refers to in the title of the chapter. Shipwreck divers are also eager to keep the locations of their finds secret. Sometimes divers and fishermen trade numbers, however, and this is what Bill Nagle is waiting to do at the opening of the chapter. A fisherman named Skeets tells Nagle about a deep spot about 60 miles off shore that seems to be a very large object underwater. He offers to trade the location coordinates for those of another wreck he knows Nagle can locate.

Nagle agrees and the two men trade numbers. Skeets tells Nagle the water is over 200 feet deep at the spot, close to the limit that humans can dive. Nagle contacts his friend John Chatterton, a commercial diver who helps him operate his dive charters. The two men soon become excited about the unknown wreck and the prospect of finding something new. Chatterton helps sign on twelve other divers who are willing to cover expenses to go to the site and explore it. He makes no promises as to what they might find. They set out from Brielle in early September, 1991 on the Seeker toward the coordinates of the mystery wreck.



Zero Viz

Zero Viz Summary and Analysis

The second chapter is called "Zero Viz," a reference to the "zero visibility" that a deep sea diver sometimes encounters while underwater. The chapter is a departure from the past tense narrative form of the book and is written primarily in the present tense. In the chapter, Kurson describes some of the extreme dangers faced by deep sea shipwreck divers as well as some of the methods they use.

Deep-shipwreck diving is extremely dangerous, Kurson explains, and is very different than the shallow scuba diving that is a more popular form of diving. The first major difference is a condition called "nitrogen narcosis" that occurs at depths below 66 feet and worsens as the depth increases. Nitrogen narcosis is caused by nitrogen accumulating in the blood stream under the high pressure underwater. It impairs motor skills and reduces peripheral vision. It also heightens emotions, which can lead a diver to panic over small problems, and slows thinking, which can cause him to ignore large problems. Nitrogen narcosis can also cause hallucinations.

A second major danger of the deep-shipwreck diver is a condition called "decompression sickness," commonly referred to as "the bends." Bends occur when a diver ascends into shallower water too quickly and the nitrogen in his blood is forced into his tissues, causing internal bleeding, extreme pain and possibly death. To avoid the bends, a diver must ascend slowly, stopping at different depths along his ascent and waiting for the nitrogen gas to naturally dissipate from his system.

Aside from these primary risks from deep water diving are those related to diving in shipwrecks in particular. Wrecks are usually very damaged and cables, rails, and other parts of the broken ship can easily be caught on divers' equipment. Shipwrecks often settle at odd angles, so a diver entering a wreck can become disoriented by slanted walls and doors and become lost. Inside the wreck, silt and debris that has settled becomes disturbed by the motion of the diver and fills the water, reducing visibility, sometimes down to nothing.

The regular practice in diving a wreck is for one diver to descend first and attach an anchor line from the ship directly to the wreck. This not only keeps the ship anchored near the wreck, but serves as a guide for the divers below to find their way back. Undersea currents can carry a diver miles from the ship if he loses sight of the anchor line.

Divers often descend in twos and threes, Kurson explains, and will usually try to help another diver in trouble, but this itself is dangerous if the endangered diver is in a panic. Kurson gives an example of a diver who mistakenly thought he was out of air and began to panic. When two other divers tried to help him, he struggled with them in confusion. In the struggle, one of the other divers nearly ran out of air himself and the other was

sent in a rapid ascent to the surface without being able to see the anchor line. He miraculously found the line again and was able to decompress, and the two divers survived. The panicked diver died with a full tank of air.



A Shape of Power

A Shape of Power Summary and Analysis

The trip to the possible wreck site is six hours out of Brielle and the twelve divers who have signed on to the trip make themselves comfortable for the journey. All have been on charters to "mystery numbers" before and are prepared for the possibility that they might only find a pipe barge or a pile of rocks.

When the Seeker reaches the coordinates, Bill Nagle sweeps back and forth over the site, watching the images on his depth finder. The object is deeper than anyone thought. It lies under about 230 feet of water, the outer limits of where most divers go. Nagle and Chatterton come up with a plan. Chatterton will make the first dive and examine the wreck. If it looks like it is worth diving, he will release a single styrofoam cup as a signal and tie on the anchor line. If it is only a pipe barge or rocks, he will release two cups.

Chatterton descends and lands on a large metallic surface. He sees a railing and a streamlined part of the hull that does not seem to belong to a barge. Poking his head through an opening, he sees what he thinks are several pipes lying in a heap. He first thinks they have only found a pipe barge until he looks more closely at the pipes and realizes they are actually torpedoes. Slowly, the realization comes to him that the wreck is a submarine. Excitedly, he releases one cup as a signal and ties on the anchor. He begins his slow ascent to the surface.

The divers in the boat are pleased to see the signal from Chatterton. One of them descends down to the location where Chatterton is decompressing. Chatterton takes out a slate and writes "SUB" on it in large letters. The other diver rushes to the surface and informs the other divers that they have found a submarine.

The divers are very excited at the prospect of diving an undiscovered submarine. Their initial dives provide no clues about the identity of the sub, but most are convinced it has to be a German U-boat from World War II. Nagle and the other divers swear to keep the submarine a secret, to preserve it for themselves to dive again.

The secrecy is a precaution against one primary competitor of Nagle's, Steve Bielenda. The two have developed a rivalry and do not like each other. Nagle is afraid that if Bielenda finds out about the sub he will go there and dive it himself. The secret does not last, however, as Nagle himself confides in one of his crew who is not on the Seeker that day. Word soon spreads that a Nazi U-boat has been discovered. Nagle and the other divers try to downplay it as rumors. One of the people who learns the truth is a diver named Richie Kohler, who is told by one of the divers on the Seeker. Kohler decides he has to be on the next trip to the wreck.

Meanwhile, several of the divers begin to dream about the potential treasure that might be found on board and look for ways to identify the U-boat. John Chatterton learns that

an intact U-boat exists in a museum in Chicago and makes plans to visit it to get an idea of the interior and where he might look for identification.



John Chatterton

John Chatterton Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4 is a brief biography of John Chatterton, one of the two central figures in the book. Chatterton grows up in Garden City, Long Island. His family is comfortable, his father an aerospace engineer. His parents argue frequently and John finds peace at the seaside. He develops a love of the sea early on.

Chatterton enlists in the army during the Vietnam War and trains to be a medic. He is sent to Vietnam and almost immediately finds himself in great danger as he is expected to rush to wounded soldiers and help them return to safety. Chatterton shows great courage as a medic and gains the respect of his fellow soldiers.

After returning home and leaving the army, Chatterton has a difficult time adjusting. He meets a woman named Kathy who encourages him to return to school before his military benefits expire and he enrolls to study computer programming. Shortly before he is to begin classes, however, he decides he cannot go through with it. He decides he wants to become a commercial diver instead.

Over the next several years, Chatterton establishes a solid career as a commercial diver, regularly diving into cramped and dangerous locations to repair and maintain underwater equipment and structures. He uses his diving skills in his hobby of shipwreck diving and soon has a reputation as one of the best divers on the East Coast, willing to go almost anywhere, especially on the popular Andrea Doria wreck, where Chatterton makes his way into parts of the ship nobody has visited before.

Chatterton also develops a personal ethic about wreck diving. When he learns that another diver has removed a bone from a German wreck, he personally calls the diver and tells him he will hound him until that diver returns the bone to the wreck.

Kurson uses this chapter to introduce one of the book's main figures and to establish some of the admirable traits of Chatterton that he will elaborate upon in later chapters. Chatterton's experience as a medic under fire in Vietnam will be reflected as he tries to save injured divers. His personal ethic regarding the remains of mariners on the shipwrecks he dives will also be further explored.



Crazy Deep

Crazy Deep Summary and Analysis

Tragedy strikes the diving group on their next trip to the submarine wreck. After Chatterton attaches the anchor line, two divers named Steve Feldman and Paul Skibinski are the next to dive. As a result of the time needed to slowly ascend, a typical diver has only fifteen to twenty minutes to explore the wreck before starting his ascent. Skibinski and Feldman are friends who search inside a large hole in the sub for any artifacts they might find. After the planned amount of time, Skibinski begins his ascent, but noticed that Feldman is still on the wreck. Sensing something might be wrong, Skibinski returns to Feldman and sees he has spit out his regulator and is not blinking or responding. Skibinski has to decide what to do quickly. He thinks if he can get Feldman into shallower water he might regain consciousness.

Skibinski toils to pull Feldman's limp body up the anchor line. He meets two other divers coming down and lets go of the line to rest. Instantly the current carries him and Feldman away from the line. Skibinski loses hold of Feldman's body, which begins to sink rapidly. One of the descending divers, Doug Roberts, goes after it and locates it, but loses sight of the wreck and the anchor line. He ties a line to Feldman's body and begins to ascend, miraculously finding the anchor line again. After decompressing, he makes it to the surface.

Feldman's death alters the mood on the diving boat. Two divers go down to try to locate the body, but cannot. Nagle reports the death to the Coast Guard, which orders the boat to the nearest station to report on the death.

The death creates an opening in the dive group, and a diver named Richie Kohler asks to join. Kohler is a member of a hard-partying wreck-diving group called the Atlantic Wreck Divers that patterns itself after a motorcycle gang. Chatterton dislikes him because of his association with this group and because of an incident when Kohler and some other divers tried to capitalize on an opening that Chatterton had made into a difficult-to-reach part of the Andrea Doria. Nagle dislikes Kohler because he has been a regular client of Steve Bielenda, his rival.

Nevertheless, Kohler joins the group on the next dive to the wreck. This dive proves to be an important one, for Chatterton is able to discover some pieces of dishware marked with the Nazi swastika and the year 1942, proving the boat to be a World War II U-boat. As Chatterton ascends with the artifacts in his collection bag, Kohler meets him on his way down. Kohler reaches for Chatterton's bag to see what is in it and Chatterton reluctantly shows him. For that moment, Kurson writes, Kohler relishes the fact that he and Chatterton are the only two people in the world who know the sub is a U-boat.

Kurson sets up the initial conflict and rivalry between Kohler and Chatterton in this chapter, ending it with a suggestion that the two men might grow to respect one another over time.

Richie Kohler

Richie Kohler Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6 provides background on Richie Kohler, one of the two main figures in Kurson's book. Kohler starts diving at a young age, learning first from his father who enjoys boating and diving and often takes his children out with him on weekends. Kohler sometimes gets in trouble at school, as in one incident when he and some others set fire to a student's gym clothes inside his locker. The incident is enough to cause the Navy to deny him admission after high school, and he goes to work for the glass company owned by his father.

Kohler's parents split up and his mother takes him with her to Florida from New York, where Kohler grows up. He returns to New York to work for his father, but after a falling out he leaves the company for another one. All the while, Kohler continues to enjoy diving whenever he can. He eventually returns to his father's company and begins diving with an exclusive group called the Atlantic Wreck Divers who often charter Steve Bielenda's boat, the Wahoo. He dives the Andrea Doria and other wrecks that provide opportunities to gather loot. He eventually grows to dislike Bielenda, however, and when he hears of the discovery of the German U-boat he immediately has a strong desire to explore it for himself.



Horenburg's Knife

Horenburg's Knife Summary and Analysis

Chatterton and Kohler independently start researching the possible identification of the mystery U-boat. Meanwhile, they learn that Steve Bielenda has had a friend coax the location of the wreck out of Bill Nagle and plans a trip to the dive site. Bielenda claims the trip is to search for the body of Steve Feldman, but Chatterton believes this is just a cover for diving the wreck itself. Kurson writes that some of Bielenda's divers do search for Feldman's body, but others only dive the wreck.

Chatterton proposes to Nagle that they write a press release announcing the discovery of the wreck in the hopes that someone might come forward who could help them identify it. Nagle agrees, and Chatterton writes the release. Several days pass before a local reporter contacts them. The reporter is skeptical at first, but after seeing the evidence of the Nazi dishes, writes a front-page story on the find. The story is picked up by other news sources and soon Chatterton is inundated by people who think they knew the identity of the sub. Many of the people contacting Chatterton are cranks, but some offer tantalizing information. One contact puts him in touch with a former U-boat commander named Merten who suggests that the sub might have belonged to a commander he knew personally whom he believed had taken his sub against orders to the American coast. His friend's sub was U-851, and it had never been found. Chatterton also learns from some experts on U-boats how to identify the different types of submarines built by the Germans. Knowing the type of sub would narrow down the possibilities. Chatterton also receives a call from the German embassy in the U.S. The diplomat who speaks with Chatterton is concerned that there are human remains on the submarine and informs him that Germany does not allow sunken U-boats to be dived or disturbed. Chatterton appreciates the diplomat's concern and tells him he intends to be careful not to disturb any remains, but that he intends to keep working to identify the sub.

On the next trip of the Seeker, Chatterton plans to videotape portions of the wreck to review on the surface and better plan where to search for identification evidence. To get the best visibility, he intends to dive first so as to have clear visibility. This angers Kohler, who wants to go first to search for artifacts. The two men have some short words with one another, egged on by Bill Nagle. Nagle settles the dispute, however, as captain. Chatterton dives first.

For the first time, each diver finds human remains inside the submarine and are careful not to disturb them. Kohler finds nothing significant, however Chatterton uncovers a small wooden box that he brings to the surface. The box is packed with black mud, but inside are several pieces of silverware including a steel dinner knife with the name "Horenburg" carved into the wooden handle. Chatterton takes the knife home with him, confident that the name will lead quickly to the identification of the sub.



Chatterton also sends Kohler a copy of the videotapes he has made, asking him to look them over but not show them to anyone else, indicating a growing respect for Kohler as someone who is equally dedicated to solving the mystery.

Kurson relates many episodes in the story by recreating the dialogue between his subjects. These recreations read like condensed versions of longer conversations and sometimes seem unnatural in their language. They do contribute to the urgent pace of the story, however.



Nothing At That Location

Nothing At That Location Summary and Analysis

With the name of Horenburg, Chatterton is convinced the solution to the identity of the sub is near. He sends the name off to four U-boat experts and waits for a response. It should be as simple as finding Horenburg's name among those listed as missing submarine crew and seeing which U-boat he served on.

Chatterton receives a mysterious call from one of his contacts in the U-boat community soon afterward. The caller tells him that Horenburg is actually still alive and that the mystery sub is not the one he served on. Kurson does not identify the caller. As this information proves to be incorrect in the end, Kurson uses the episode to highlight the uncertainty of the divers in their early research, as well as to introduce some uncertainty in the mind of the reader.

Chatterton does hear back from one of the experts he contacted that the only Horenburg listed among U-boat dead served on U-869. That U-boat, however, is reported to have been sunk on the other side of the Atlantic, near Gibraltar. Chatterton is frustrated. He wonders if there might not be another Horenburg that his source missed. He knows of a war memorial to U-boat dead in Germany that has the names of all the mariners who died listed.

Chatterton goes to the memorial in Germany along with a fellow diver named John Yurga. They scour the names of the U-boat veterans, but find only one Horenburg, listed as among the crew of the U-869.

Back in the United States, before going to Germany, Chatterton visits the archives of official information on U-boat activity during World War II. He meets with Bernard Cavalcante, an archivist for the US Navy, and Dr. Dean Allard, the director of the Naval Historical Center. He shows the men some of the video footage of the mystery sub and gives them the location coordinates. Although skeptical at first, the archivists become more interested when they discover they have no record of a submarine sunk near that location. They give Chatterton access to their records, which includes not only records from the US Navy, but also German archives seized after the war.

After combing through thousands of files, Chatterton, Yurga and Kohler narrow down the likely possibilities to two U-boats, U-158 and U-851. Each was a "Type IX" sub, which the divers have determined is the type of the sub they have found. U-158 is reported damaged and sunk near Bermuda, but no debris is ever located and the sub has not been found. Kohler argues that it may have limped partially damaged up the East Coast before finally sinking. The other possibility they think is U-851, the submarine with a rogue commander who takes it to the US without orders. The three divers meet together over pizza to discuss the possibilities. They determine a way to decide between the two based on the configuration of the sub they find. U-158 is

outfitted with a deck gun, they learn, but U-851 is not. Also, U-851 is of a special cruiser class that is about 30 feet longer than other Type IX subs. They can measure the wreck to compare its length. Either way, another dive to the sub is required.

A Heavy Toll

A Heavy Toll Summary and Analysis

Confident that they would soon have an answer to the mystery, Chatterton, Kohler and the other divers prepare for the first dive of the season in 1992, scheduled for early May. Chatterton and John Yurga decide to experiment with a new diving technology called "trimix." Trimix is a new method of replacing some of the nitrogen in the diver tanks with helium. The theory is that this will relieve some of the problems associated with nitrogen narcosis and decompression. The two divers attend a seminar on the new method, but there is nobody with any extensive experience using trimix, especially not at the depths they have been diving. They have to improvise a way to fill their tanks and mix their own trimix in Chatterton's garage. They test the mix in shallow water with good results and plan to use it while diving the submarine wreck. Kohler dismisses trimix as too experimental to risk using at the great depth of the submarine.

Bill Nagle's alcoholism has worsened in the off season and he is incapable of piloting the Seeker when it returns to the wreck site. The divers intend to look for evidence of a deck gun and to measure the length of the sub to test their theories about its identification. The trip is cut short, however, when a diver named Kohl has a close call with death. Kohl has forgotten to adjust his buoyancy when first entering the water and begins sinking quickly to the bottom. After only a few minutes, he panics and shoots for the surface again, risking the bends. Kohl has some joint pain and bleeding and a Coast Guard chopper is called to evacuate him. He eventually survives the ordeal, but decides not to return with the Seeker for the second dive of the season.

He is replaced on the next dive by a father and son diving team named Chris and Chrissy Rouse. During the second dive, divers manage to measure the length of the sub and realize it is too short to be the U-851. Additionally, there is no deck gun, which rules out the U-158. Again, no evidence from inside the sub points to its identity.

While planning for the next dive, Chatterton and Kohler meet over dinner and lay down ground rules for searching the areas of the sub where they have found human remains. They know that they might find evidence about the sub by searching the pockets of dead mariners, but decide they will not disturb any remains if possible, even if it means they might never identify the sub.

The final dive of the season is a tragic one. While diving with his father, Chrissy Rouse becomes trapped inside the submarine and panics while struggling to get free. He frees himself, but shoots for the surface in a panic. His father goes up after him and they stop part way up the anchor line. Chris Rouse tries to give his son some air, but a hose has torn and Chrissy cannot breathe. Both men return rapidly to the surface, unconscious. Chris Rouse never regains consciousness. Chrissy begins screaming in pain from the bends. A Coast Guard chopper comes in to evacuate the divers, but both of them die.

History Mauled

History Mauled Summary and Analysis

Kohler and Chatterton return to Washington to renew their research after the two main possibilities for the identity of the submarine are eliminated. They begin to compare the records of submarine encounters by the Navy off the East Coast with the records made after the war that assess each incident and record its probable outcome. They are startled to find that the official accounts that are completed after the war sometimes contradict the records that are made shortly after each incident.

One such case intrigues them especially. A Navy destroyer called the *Gustafson* encounters U-857 off the coast of Boston in April, 1945 and fires on it. The sub is hit, but it submerges and no debris is ever discovered. The Navy assessors at the time classify the status of the submarine as "probably slightly damaged" (p. 227). However, in the official account compiled after the war is over, the submarine's status is altered to "probably sunk," even there is no evidence to suggest it actually sank. The change in status, the divers believe, is done to tie up the loose end of the U-857's unknown status. They theorize that U-857 might have continued on down the East Coast after its encounter and eventually sunk at the wreck's location off New Jersey.

Another argument in favor of the U-857 being the sub is that its records indicate that it was built about the same time and commissioned in the same port in Norway as the U-869, Horenburg's submarine. They conjecture that Horenburg might have lost his knife or given it to another mariner while both subs were in port together. Chatterton and Kohler present their new theory to some of the experts on U-boats they know, and all agree that it seems likely the mystery submarine is the U-857.

The discovery of the discrepancy in official accounts of wartime records is an important turning point in the book, as it will eventually prove that the official account of the U-869, which is the actual identity of the wrecked sub in question, is also incorrect in recording its sinking near Gibraltar. Kurson does not indicate this at this point in the book, instead following the thinking at the time of Chatterton and Kohler that they have probably discovered the U-857.

One of the themes developed by Kurson in the book is that even so-called experts on a subject can be wrong and that the accounts of events found in history books are subject to inaccuracies. Kurson presents his story as one of amateur historians coming in direct contact with the past and correcting the official accounts.



A Missed Signal

A Missed Signal Summary and Analysis

In May, 1993, Kohler and Chatterton return to the submarine wreck with Bill Nagle and several other divers. They retrieve several more artifacts, but none of them have any distinctive identification marks. One item, an oxygen tank that is part of an emergency escape device, is stamped April, 1945, which narrows down the date of the sub.

Bill Nagle's health declines seriously during the diving season of 1993 and he is hospitalized for internal bleeding caused by his alcoholism. After he is released he continues to drink and dies from the bleeding.

One morning Chatterton receives a letter from a defense official in England named Robert Coppock, who has become interested in the mystery. Coppock writes that the U-869, the boat on which Horenburg had been a radioman, was originally ordered to the East Coast of America to patrol the waters off New York. After leaving port, a radio signal was sent to U-869 with new orders to go to Gibraltar. In his search of the intercepted German communications, Coppock found no response from U-869 acknowledging the new orders. This by itself would not have been unusual, Kurson explains, for by sending out a radio signal a submarine would give away its location and so even if the U-869 had received the new orders it might not have acknowledged them.

Another possibility, Coppock suggests to Chatterton, was that U-869 never received the new orders at all and had continued on to New York. In Coppock's opinion, there was a real possibility that the mystery sub was U-869.

Excited at the prospect, Chatterton notifies Kohler and then returns to Washington to examine the records for U-869. There he finds a similar situation as with U-857. An encounter with a German submarine is recorded by a French ship near Gibraltar where the sub is fired upon but no evidence of damage is observed. After the war, the incident is compared to the intercepted German orders that show that U-869 is ordered to Gibraltar about that time. It is assumed that the U-boat fired on by the French ship is the U-869, and since the U-869 is never captured or found afterwards, its status is changed after the war to "probably sunk" near Gibraltar. Excited, Chatterton runs to a pay phone to call Kohler and give him the news. The sub is almost certainly U-869.

None Of Us Is Coming Back

None Of Us Is Coming Back Summary and Analysis

Chapter 12 is a narrative historical account of the weeks leading up to the commissioning of U-869 in Bremen, Germany in January, 1944.

Herbert Guschiewski is a radioman assigned to the crew of U-869. Along with the rest of the crew, Guschiewski undergoes basic submarine training after gathering in Bremen early in January. One of the other crewmen is Martin Horenberg, also a radioman.

After a few weeks of training, the crew finally meets the officers who will command the newly-built U-869. The commander is a twenty-six-year-old former pilot named Helmuth Neuerburg. Neuerburg is a strict commander who rarely shows any sign of emotion. He understands the war is not going well for Germany and that his submarine command is likely to end like many others in failure. He has a strong sense of duty to his command, although Kurson suggests that he may not have agreed with the policies of the Nazi Party.

Neuerburg's first officer is twenty-one-year-old Siegfried Brandt, an easy-going young man who gets along well with the enlisted mariners and who has been on submarine crews before. The chief engineer is thirty-year-old Ludwig Kessler. At the end of January, U-869 sets out for the Baltic Sea for more training on board the sub.

Another crew member profiled by Kurson is Franz Nedel. Nedel is only nineteen and engaged to be married when he is assigned to the U-869. He is a torpedoman, excited to see action in the war. His excitement turns to a feeling of impending doom as he begins to feel more and more that he and his crew will not return from their mission. Kurson describes the tearful departure of the U-869 at which Nedel tells his fiance, Gila, "None of us is coming back" (p. 283).

Chapter 12 is a departure from the narrative of the book where Kurson attempts to recreate the atmosphere in wartime Germany late in the war. Commanding a submarine is once a glamorous assignment when the German U-boats are terrorizing the seas, but by 1944 a post to a submarine command is considered the same as a suicide mission, Kurson explains. He depicts the crewmen of U-869 as gravely aware of their probable fate.

While Kurson is writing a work of non-fiction, he does not annotate his text with sources. The sudden change to an historical perspective is somewhat confusing, leaving one wondering how Kurson is able to write accurately about such historical events. Later in the book, it will become evident that Kurson is able to interview a crewman and relatives of other crewman who are present in 1944.



The U-Boat is Our Moment and Circle Runner

The U-Boat is Our Moment and Circle Runner Summary and Analysis

Chatterton and Kohler are now virtually certain the sub they have discovered is U-869, however, no definitive proof has been recovered from the actual wreck. They decide they will continue diving, looking for proof.

The divers find many more artifacts, but nothing that is marked or stamped with the number of the submarine. Eventually, they are nearly the only divers willing to dive the wreck. The three deaths that have already occurred there keep most divers away from the site.

Meanwhile, Kohler's marriage is suffering as a result of his constant diving. As a promise to his wife, he gives up diving completely in order to spend more time with his wife and children. Chatterton turns his attention to other wrecks, spending the next two years making important discoveries and diving other wrecks.

Kohler's self-imposed ban on diving does not save his marriage and soon he is separated from his wife. At Chatterton's encouragement, he returns to diving and the two men begin to talk about new places on the sub to look for identification. They learn from another diver that he once found an identification tag on a wooden spare parts box in the electric motor room of a different wreck.

Chatterton and Kohler are excited to learn this. They have not yet been inside the electric motor room of the mystery sub. The room leading to the electric motor room is blocked by an escape tube that has fallen in the middle of it. They make plans to lower a large chain to the tube and try to winch it out of the way. While diving to inspect the area, however, Kohler finds he is able to move the tube himself. A few hours later, after the silt has settled, the divers return to the area only to find that the door to the electric motor room is further blocked by a fallen fuel tank. It is much too large to be moved, even by machine.

Devastated, the divers return to the dive boat. As the boat leaves the site, Chatterton outlines a plan for getting past the tank and into the electric motor room. Kohler is astonished. Chatterton's plan sounds too dangerous. He refuses to help him, but Chatterton says he will follow through with it and that he needs Kohler's help. Kurson does not reveal the details of Chatterton's plan at this point in the book, ending the chapter on a note of suspense.

Chapter 13 is a short chapter that returns to the historical depiction of the crew on board U-869. Kurson now imagines the final days of the submarine's mission. He imagines the



U-boat has continued on its original mission to the coast off New York to torpedo enemy ships. He describes the orders of the US Navy to intercept it after having decoded its orders. He conjectures that the commander spots an enemy ship and gives orders for the torpedoes to be loaded and fired.

This chapter is based on the theory that U-869 is destroyed by one of its own automatic torpedoes that locks on to the sound of the sub's own engines and circles back to strike the submarine. He stops short of depicting the actual event of the sub's sinking, but its final fate is implied in the title of the chapter, "Circle Runner."

An Audacious Plan

An Audacious Plan Summary and Analysis

Chatterton's plan is to approach the tank blocking the way to the electric motor room wearing only one air tank rather than the usual two. He will then take his tank off and hold it in front of him, making his profile slender enough to fit through a small gap around the tank and reach the electric motor room. Kohler thinks the idea is crazy and too full of risks. Chatterton insists he is going to try it and Kohler eventually agrees to dive with him.

Chatterton tests his plan on their next visit to the wreck site. It goes off smoothly, except that his video camera does not work. He returns with a working camera and obtains footage of a stack of boxes in the room. These are the spare parts boxes he had hoped to find. They are heavily encrusted, however, and a large pipe is laying across them. Chatterton dives again with a sledgehammer to move the pipe out of the way. He knocked the pipe once, removing much of the encrustation that has built up on it and revealing it to be a large oxygen tank. Chatterton knows from earlier experience that the tank might still be pressurized and could explode if he hits it again. Nevertheless, he takes one more swing at it and knocks it loose from the boxes. It does not explode.

Chatterton grabs the smallest of the boxes and hands it out through the gap to Kohler, who is waiting for him. Kohler hands it to another diver to take to the surface. Meanwhile, Chatterton sees he has five minutes of air left in his main tank and decides to try to move one of the larger boxes over to the opening. He struggles with the box until he realizes he is nearly out of air. He needs to get to his third tank, which he has left outside the wreck on top of the submarine. He quickly makes his way to the opening, but becomes ensnared by a piece of wiring. Fighting panic, Chatterton frees himself from the wire and shoots out through the opening past Kohler and out toward his third air tank. He has run completely out of air and has spit the regulator from his mouth.

Kohler is shocked to see Chatterton without his regulator and follows close behind him to where the extra tanks are. Chatterton hooks up his tank and begins breathing and the two men begin their slow ascent to the boat. As they wait at one of their decompression stops, another diver comes down with the news that the box has a plate stamped U-869.

Epilogue

Epilogue Summary and Analysis

In the epilogue to the book, Kurson writes that the actual case of the sinking of U-869 will probably never be known for sure, but he argues that it was "almost certainly" sunk by its own torpedo. He describes how the acoustically-guided torpedoes used by World War II submarines could turn around and head toward the submarine itself if they missed their initial target.

Following the identification of U-869, John Chatterton has little to do with the wreck. He continues diving and experimenting with new diving technology and remains friends with Richie Kohler.

Following the identification of the wreck, Kohler makes contact with the family members of some of the crewmen aboard U-869 and eventually travels to Germany to meet some of them, including Herbert Guschewski, an original crew member on U-869. Just a few hours before the sub is to leave on its initial patrol, Guschewski falls very sick from pneumonia. He remains in the hospital while his fellow crewmen depart on the mission from which they will not return. Kohler visits with Guschewski who, like everyone else, assumed the sub was sunk near Gibraltar. He asks Kohler for a memento of the boat, which Kohler gladly promises to give him.

Kurson reveals in the back material that he is also present during Kohler's trip to Germany and interviews Guschewski himself to provide material about the preparations in 1944 to send U-869 on its first mission.



Characters

John Chatterton

John Chatterton is a commercial diver and one of the group who discovers U-869. He grows up in New Jersey and after high school joins the military service and is sent to the war in Vietnam, where he serves as a medic. In his role, he is frequently called into dangerous situations under fire to help injured and wounded servicemen.

After leaving the service, John works in the medical field and then trains to be a computer programmer. Since childhood he has loved the sea and after taking a diving class he decides to become a commercial diver. He builds a successful career from commercial diving, as well as crucial diving skills which he puts to use in his hobby of shipwreck diving.

Kurson describes Chatterton as a very methodical diver who makes plans before each dive and then sticks closely to them. Before hunting for artifacts he typically makes exploratory dives with a video camera to examine potential dangers. The identification of the mystery U-boat becomes a central project for Chatterton along with his friend, Richie Kohler, and is the primary subject of Kurson's book.

Richie Kohler

Richie Kohler grows up mostly with his mother in Florida after she splits up with his father. Later he reconciles with his father and takes over the family glass business. Kohler often gets into trouble as a young man and is denied entrance into the Navy because of his record.

Kohler loves to read about history and is an avid diver who eventually joins a club called the Atlantic Wreck Divers that styles itself after a motorcycle gang. This group likes to party as much as it likes to dive and prizes the collection of artifacts from wreck sites.

Kohler's hard-partying personality clashes with the methodical nature of John Chatterton when the men first meet on a dive to the mystery U-boat, but the two men eventually come to respect one another and their friendship grows.

Kohler's obsession with diving strains his marriage and he gives up diving for a period of time at the insistence of his wife. His marriage fails, however, and he returns to diving with Chatterton at the U-boat site and researching the possible identity of the mystery sub. Kohler, along with Chatterton, is one of the central figures in Kurson's book.



Bill Nagle

Bill Nagle is a onetime excellent deep sea diver whose alcoholism leaves him more and more debilitated until he can no longer dive. Nagle owns the Seeker, a boat docked in Brielle, New Jersey, which he uses to take charter groups of divers to various wreck sites in the Atlantic.

It is Nagle who first locates the site of the mystery submarine having obtained the navigation coordinates from a fisherman who tells him there is some large object at that location. Nagle captains several more trips to the submarine site, carrying John Chatterton and Richie Kohler among others to explore the wreck.

Nagle dies from complications related to his excessive drinking.

Martin Horenburg

Martin Horenburg is the radio operator on the U-869. He dies on the submarine. A knife belonging to Horenburg with his name carved in the handle is one of the first clues to the identity of the mystery sub, although the divers do not think it could actually be the U-869 at first.

Steve Feldman

Steve Feldman is a diver who dies while exploring U-869 after becoming disoriented and running out of air. His body floats away from the wreck and cannot be found for some time. His body is eventually recovered several miles from the wreck by the Coast Guard.

Chris and Chrissy Rouse

Chris and Chrissy Rouse are a father and son diving team who die while exploring the U-869. After becoming tangled in the wreckage, Chrissy Rouse runs low on air, as does his father who tries to help him. They both rapidly ascend to the surface, causing the bends, a dangerous and painful condition that kills both men.

Paul Skibinski

A friend of Steve Feldman who is diving with him when he dies and who tries to save him.



Helmuth Neuerburg

The commander of U-869 who dies in the wreck. A former fighter pilot, Neuerburg is on his first submarine command.

Herbert Guschewski

The original radioman on U869. Guschewski becomes ill just before the U-boat leaves on its fatal mission and so is not on board. He is the only surviving member of the original crew.

Siegfried Brandt

The first officer on board U-869. Brandt is a young man known for his easy disposition.

Horst Bredow

A U-boat veteran and German historian of U-boat history. Bredow supplies the researchers with information about German U-boat activity.

Kevin Brennan

One of the divers who explores U-869. Brennan saves the life of Paul Skibinski when he runs out of air while resurfacing.

Bernard Cavalcante

The head of the naval archives that Kohler and Chatterton use to research U-boat activity. Cavalcante becomes very interested in their efforts to identify the mystery sub.

Danny Crowell

The first mate on board the Seeker. Crowell takes over operations of the dive trips when Bill Nagle is unable to continue.

John Yurga

The manager of a dive equipment shop who is present on the first dive of the mystery sub.



Objects/Places

U-boat

The abbreviation for unterseeboot, a German submarine. Germany deployed hundreds of U-boats during World War II to attack ships at sea.

U-869

A large attack submarine sunk off the coast of New Jersey under mysterious circumstances. It is this submarine that is discovered by the divers, as described in Kurson's book.

World War II

A major conflict in the 1940s between Germany and its allies and the United Kingdom and United States and their allies. Much of the fighting against Germany took place in Europe, but sometimes approached the shores of the United States, as in the case of U-869.

Vietnam

A Southeast Asian country that was the location of a protracted military operation by the United States. John Chatterton, one of the main figures in the book, served as a combat medic in Vietnam.

New Jersey

An American state on the Atlantic coast. U-869 is discovered off the coast of New Jersey.

Brielle

The small harbor town in New Jersey where the U-boat divers depart from.

The Seeker

The boat operated by Bill Nagle that is specially equipped for deep sea diving.



National Archives

A public depository of official records in Washington, D.C. Kohler and Chatterton perform research at the National Archives on U-boat activity off the Atlantic coast of the US.

Trimix

A special mixture of gasses for breathing underwater. The mixture is experimental at the time Chatterton and Kohler are diving and Chatterton is one of the first divers to adopt its use.

Andrea Doria

A famous shipwreck off the Atlantic coast. Both Chatterton and Kohler have dived the Andrea Doria several times and Chatterton is well-known for having penetrated deep parts of the wreck others are afraid to enter.

Circle Runner

The term for an acoustically-guided torpedo that misses its target and locks in on the submarine that fired it, circling around to hit it. Kurson theorizes that U-869 may have been the victim of a circle runner.

Radioman

The position on a submarine crew that monitors radio traffic. Herbert Guschewski, the only surviving crewman, is originally a radioman. Horenburg, whose knife is discovered by the divers, is also a radioman.

Horenburg's knife

A dinner knife with a wooden handle discovered by John Chatterton in U-869. The name Horenburg is carved in the handle of the knife, providing what is to become an important clue to the identity of the mystery sub.

Themes

The Mystery of U-869

The central theme of "Shadow Divers" is the search for the identity of the mysterious German U-boat discovered by Bill Nagle, John Chatterton and others. Kurson constructs the story like a mystery, leading the reader along with the deductions by the main figures even when those deductions later turn out to be incorrect.

The first question that is resolved is the origin of the sub. It is identified as a German Nazi U-boat by a piece of china found in one of the early dives with the Nazi swastika emblem and the date 1942. Another tantalizing clue is the steel dinner knife with a wooden handle carved with the name "Horenburg." Military records show only one Horenburg is assigned to a German U-boat, the U-869. The divers have the answer to their biggest question early on, but they dismiss it because official records list U-869 as having been sunk near Gibraltar, in North Africa.

The search for some positive proof of the identity consumes John Chatterton and Richie Kohler. They each spend hours and hours reading and researching official records and corresponding with other hobbyists and experts on German submarines, even contacting a former U-boat commander. Their research leads them down several false trails and Kurson lets the reader go with them, only describing the reasoning of the two men and not commenting on whether they are correct or not.

This method adds to the suspenseful tone of the book and Kurson leaves the final confirmation until near the end, after John Chatterton locates a box stamped with the U-boat's number in a difficult-to-reach section of the sub. Prior to this confirmation, Chatterton and Kohler have finally deduced that the official records are incorrect and that the sub is probably U-869. The final confirmation is therefore not the climax of the mystery, but comes as a kind of justification for their hard work.

The Friendship of Chatterton and Kohler

When they first meet, John Chatterton and Richie Kohler already know one another by reputation. Chatterton is a methodical, careful diver who plans his dives meticulously. Kohler is a member of a hard-partying diving club who maintains an image as a rebel. Kurson casts these two men as opposites who one would never expect to become friends. Indeed, their first few dives together, according to Kurson, have some tense moments as the two men engage in some minor clashes.



Their mutual fascination with the mystery submarine draws them together in Kurson's account and they gradually grow to like and trust one another, even to the point of diving together to the submarine. The theme of their growing friendship is developed throughout the book by the author and adds a personal tone to the book as the two men turn to one another during difficult times in their personal lives and encourage one another in their quest to identify the mystery submarine.

Kurson describes how the different personalities of the two men complement one another in achieving their goal. Chatterton continues to exercise great caution and forward planning in their dives to the wreck, but he also gains respect for Kohler's seat-of-the-pants technique. An example is when Chatterton makes elaborate plans to bring equipment to the dive site to lift a large obstacle that blocks off part of the wreck. Kohler, acting on instinct, manages to move the obstacle himself with no mechanical help, to the astonishment of Chatterton. Likewise, Kohler comes to respect Chatterton's methodical approach when he witnesses him make the very difficult entrance into an isolated part of the wreck.

The two friends seem to go their separate ways after the identification of the sub. Kurson downplays this aspect of their friendship and mentions in the epilogue that they still meet occasionally for dinner.

The Contribution of Amateur Historians

One of the main themes in Kurson's account of the mystery of U-869 is how two amateur historians prove that part of the accepted academic history is incorrect. At first, Chatterton and Kohler are lead away from the evidence they themselves have uncovered by their blind acceptance of "official" history. The knife that John Chatterton discovers on the mystery submarine bears the name of a crewman who is on U-869, however the official war records list U-869 as having been sunk near North Africa.

The men do not question the official account at first and look for other possible explanations. They receive help from several other U-boat enthusiasts, most of them amateurs who have cultivated deep knowledge of submarine warfare and equipment.

After gaining access to documents in naval archives, the two divers come to understand that records are frequently "cleaned up" after the war in order to close files and that some submarines whose fates are actually unknown are listed as sunk. This opens the possibility to them that the unknown sub they have discovered may in fact be U-869 as the original evidence suggested.

Kurson plays upon the relatively un-academic background of the two divers, contrasting them with the more learned officials they encounter while researching war records. He creates a dramatic scene when John Chatterton, a self-taught amateur, astonishes several naval officials with his discovery of an unknown German submarine. In the end, it is the amateurs who rewrite the history books on U869.

Kurson also emphasizes the point as he describes Richie Kohler's visit to Germany to meet with some of the family of the crew of U-869. The history in books is not always to be trusted, Kurson suggests. It is ultimately a story of real people, and real people like Kohler and Chatterton can contribute to it.

Style

Perspective

Kurson writes in the voice of an omniscient narrator who knows the thoughts and motivations behind the people who are his subjects. His two primary subjects are the deep sea divers John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, and he recreates the events surrounding the discovery and identification of U-869 based largely on their recollections and accounts of what happened. Kurson writes as if he is describing the events as they unfolded.

One of the themes that runs through Kurson's book is that history is not always recorded precisely. The two divers discover this when they learn the U-boat they have discovered near New Jersey is recorded as having been sunk near North Africa. Kurson attempts to create a kind of anti-intellectual perspective that describes the two amateur historians re-writing history that the academic historians got wrong.

Kurson also adopts a personal perspective to the story. Rather than simply presenting the facts and events immediately relevant to the story of the sunken submarine, he delves into the personal lives of the people involved in the investigation of the sub, describing their relationship problems with their wives and other divers. Kurson is throughout sympathetic to Chatterton and Kohler, depicting them as men driven by a common passion, even when it threatens to unravel their personal lives.

Tone

Kurson constructs his account of the discovery, exploration and identification of U-869 as a mystery adventure, and maintains a suspenseful tone throughout the book. He opens with a scene of anticipation as Captain Bill Nagle waits to meet with another boat captain who has promised to give him the location of a possible undersea wreck that was not known before. Kurson describes the moment as a life changing one for Nagle, as it sets him on the trail to discovering the mystery U-boat. Kurson's description also sets the tone early on that the events he describes are unique and life changing for many of the people involved, especially John Chatterton and Richie Kohler.

In several instances Kurson sets up rivalries and conflict. He describes the animosity between Nagle and other sea captains who compete to find the best wrecks and artifacts. He also recounts the initial conflicts between Chatterton and Kohler, who will later become good friends. These conflicts add to the high-tension tone that Kurson tries to maintain throughout the book.

Kurson also includes several passages that are quickly paced and suspenseful. Deep sea diving is highly dangerous and he describes several treacherous episodes where divers are injured or killed from the hazards, written in an urgent style meant to excite



the reader. The book ends with an optimistic tone, after the U-boat is identified and the two main subjects look forward to a more settled life.

Structure

"Shadow Divers" is written in the third person voice, past tense. It is divided into fifteen chapters plus an epilogue. The book includes a diagram of the U-boat and several pages of color photographs of the sunken submarine and the divers that are the primary subjects of the book, as well as historic photographs of the original mariners who manned the sunken sub. Kurson also includes a section describing his research sources and an index.

Kurson constructs the book as a mystery adventure and tells the story mainly in chronological order without revealing the final information that is being sought until near the end of the book. He temporarily interrupts the chronological sequence by flashing back to biographical background on the childhoods and earlier lives of John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, the two divers who are the focus of the book. Kurson also includes a dramatic account of the preparations of the submarine crew to set out in the 1940s on what would be their last mission in the U-boat later discovered by the divers.

Kurson also includes a chapter early in the book called "Zero Viz" that explains the particular dangers faced by deep sea divers from the effects of extreme water pressure that disorients them and potentially causes panic. As the book progresses, Kurson describes the deaths of several divers who attempt to explore the sunken sub and relates their actions to the effects described in this chapter.



Quotes

"Bill Nagle's life changed the day a fisherman sat beside him in a ramshackle bar and told him about a mystery he had found lying at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean."

Chapter 1, p. 3.

"Deep-shipwreck diving is among the world's most dangerous sports. Few other endeavors exist in which nature, biology, equipment, instinct and object conspire—without warning and from all directions—to so completely attack a man's mind and disassemble his spirit." Chapter 2, p. 22.

"He closed his eyes for a moment and opened them again. The shape was still there. Fins. Propeller. Cigar body. A shape from scary books and terrifying movies. A shape left over from childhood's imagination. A shape of power. A torpedo." Chapter 3, p. 47.

"Skibinski grabbed Feldman and turned him around. Feldman's regulator fell from his mouth. His eyes were not blinking. Skibinski looked deeper into his friend's mask, but Feldman just kept staring back, he would not blink..." Chapter 5, p. 100.

"If ever a person had been born to dive a virgin U-boat, that person was Richie Kohler." Chapter 6, p. 120.

"The hair on the back of his neck stood up. The other divers crowded closer. Chatterton kept rubbing. The final crusts of clay fell to the table. Beneath his thumb, carved into the knife's handle in handwritten letters, was a name. It said HORENBURG." Chapter 7, p. 168.

"Chatterton made his way through every incident report for the entire war. In four years, not a single Allied force had engaged a submarine within a fifteen-mile radius of the wreck site." Chapter 8, p. 181.

"At the stern, Kohler worked into the aft torpedo room and began to search for artifacts. As before in this place, he saw a femur, then a skull and several other bones." Chapter 9, p. 199.

"The first u-boat trip of 1993 was scheduled for May 31, Memorial Day. As Chatterton and Kohler drove their cars to the Seeker's dock, neither could remember having felt so content." Chapter 11, p. 239.

"In the chill morning of a new year, as ruins still smoldered in Berlin from fresh British bombings, hundreds of young German men from throughout the country made their way to the Deschimag shipyard in the seaport town of Bremen to begin naval training." Chapter 12, p. 259.

"Since 1991, Chatterton and Kohler had believed in history. Every book, expert, and document listed U-869 as sunk off Gibraltar. Now, two and a half years later, the

intercepted radio messages between U-869 and U-boat Control virtually proved that the New Jersey U-boat was U-869." Chapter 13, p. 285.

"The plan's dangers were encyclopedic, a textbook on how to get killed inside a shipwreck." With just a single tank to breathe, Chatterton would have only twenty minutes on the other side of the obstruction." Chapter 15, p. 311.

Topics for Discussion

How does Kurson develop the relationship between Chatterton and Kohler?

What is Kurson's perspective on history and the historical record?

Is the discovery and identification of U-869 historically important? Why or why not?

Discuss how Kurson creates suspense and dramatic tension in his account.

What drives the main figures in *Shadow Divers* according to Kurson? Are they justified in their apparent obsessions?

What ethical responsibility do the main figures in the book feel regarding the exploration of U-869? Do they always follow their ethical guidelines?

What mysteries remain regarding U-869 at the end of the book? Does the author adequately address them?