

You
**Wouldn't
Want to...**

BE ON

SHACKLETON'S POLAR EXPEDITION



Frozen
fears in
the icy
abyss!

Written by Jen Green • Illustrated by David Antram



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Introduction

The year is 1912. The great age of polar exploration is coming to an end. For the last four centuries, brave, hardy adventurers have been exploring the Arctic and Antarctic, the icy lands and seas in the far north and south. Sailors explored the Arctic first, looking for a new sea route that would lead to wealthy China. They never found a safe route, because Arctic waters are too icy. Then explorers discovered the huge, frozen continent of Antarctica and mapped its coast. During the early 1900s, they raced to be first to reach the North and South Poles, the most northerly and southerly points on the planet. Just three years ago, in 1909, American sailor Robert Peary finally conquered the North Pole. In 1911, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen just beat Captain Robert Scott of the British Royal Navy to the South Pole.

Explorers are now racking their brains to find new challenges. Irishman Ernest Shackleton, leader of several trips to Antarctica, has dreamed up a daring plan for a new trip to the far south. You are a hardened sailor called Frank Worsley, and you volunteer to join Shackleton in what will prove to be one of the most gruelling adventures of all time. You soon learn that you really wouldn't want to be a polar explorer!



A mad mission

Shackleton plans to make the first overland crossing of the vast continent of Antarctica via the South Pole. That's 3,330 km across a mostly uncharted, frozen wilderness!

Shackleton announces his plans in *The Times* newspaper. You read the article with great interest. Eager for adventure, you apply immediately. Shackleton decides to take you on!

SELLING THE DREAM

Some say that Shackleton placed the following advert in *The Times*: 'Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.' But no-one has been able to prove that this ad really existed.



THE PLAN

To set off from the Weddell Sea and cross Antarctica with a small team using sledges. On the last leg of the trip, you will use supplies left by another team setting off from the Ross Sea.



SHACKLETON'S PREVIOUS EXPEDITION

This was in 1909. His team nearly reached the South Pole, hauling their own sledges, but had to turn back 160 km away from their goal. Shackleton was knighted for his efforts – he's Sir Ernest now.

Handy hint

I wish I'd gone with them!

Do your duty! When the First World War breaks out in 1914, the whole crew volunteers to serve in the navy. But the government decides that the expedition should go ahead.

Good to have you on board, Worsley!



The Endurance

Destination Antarctica

By the summer of 1914, Shackleton's ship is ready. Built especially for polar travel, she is named Endurance, in honour of Shackleton's family motto: 'By endurance we conquer.' You are an experienced sailor, so Shackleton has made you captain. You organise the loading of supplies and then end up doing most of the hard work yourself! The ship's crew is a mix of tough old fishermen and polar experts, including several scientists just out of university. Also on board are sixty husky dogs to pull the sledges, two pigs to provide meat, and the ship's cat, Mrs Chippy.

Ship and crew

ENDURANCE is a three-masted sailing ship that also has engines. Built from very hard wood, she is designed to ram her way through the ice in polar seas.

THE EXPEDITION includes two doctors, a cook, a carpenter, an artist and a photographer. Officers, including an expert navigator and engineer, help you run the ship.

THE CREW 28 men ends up including a stowaway who sneaks on board when the ship docks at Buenos Aires, Argentina.



The crew

You set off on 8 August 1914, just as the First World War begins. Heading south, you stop at Grytviken whaling station on the lonely island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic. The whalers report that the seas are very icy this year.

Watch out!

Handy hint

Keep a lookout for icebergs. They could slice the ship in two!



Stuck in the ice

In December 1914, the ship enters the Weddell Sea. After just two days, you begin to meet large chunks of floating pack ice! You battle onwards, but six weeks later, your luck runs out. Only 160 km (about a day's sail) from land, the ship becomes firmly wedged in a great slab of ice.

In February, the ice cracks and you see water lapping near the ship.

You and the others try to dig a channel through to reach the water, but the ice is too thick. There is no radio contact with the outside world, so no-one is about to rescue you. There is nothing to do but sit tight as the stricken ship drifts with the ice slowly northwest – in the wrong direction, away from land.

Handy hint

To prevent boredom, set up goalposts on the ice and play football. It's hard to keep on your feet!

May 1915

The months pass and winter arrives. In May the sun disappears below the horizon and for the next four months there is continual darkness. You break up the long, dark days by racing the dogs in the moonlight.

January 1915

January is midsummer in Antarctica. It is light for 24 hours a day. Everyone works long hours and forgets to go to bed, so you all get very tired.



Abandon ship!



SUPPLIES

In the panic, you manage to save only a few vital provisions. Three lifeboats, the sledges, navigating equipment and the ship's banjo are piled up on the ice.

ON THE ICE

You spend your first night on the ice in a freezing tent. The temperature is -28°C . The moon shines so brightly that it keeps you awake.



After all these months, *Endurance* is still stuck fast. In August 1915 the pack ice moves and slowly begins to crush the ship. In October, loud groans and cracking sounds are heard as the hull timbers split and the glass shatters. The ship is thrown upwards and suddenly lurches onto its side while you are below decks. An icy torrent pours in and supplies, men and dogs slide into the water! You work the pumps day and night, but it's no use. Finally, Shackleton gives the order to abandon ship and you all move onto the ice.



Handy hint

Rig up canvas sheets as chutes to get supplies off the ship quickly. The huskies seem to enjoy the ride!

One week later



Hauling over the ice

Your clothing

UNDERCLOTHES

Next to your skin, you wear long underwear and thick socks, with a pullover and trousers on top.



TOP LAYER

A windbreaker jacket protects you from snow and howling blizzards. Your outfit is completed by a woollen hat, gloves and heavy boots.



Endurance finally sinks below the waves in November 1915, after ten months frozen in the ice. You are now marooned far out at sea. The nearest land, Paulet Island, off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, has a hut and supplies, but it's 650 km away! Shackleton decides to make for it across the ice, dragging two of the ship's three lifeboats.

You and the rest of the crew are harnessed in teams to 'manhaul' the boats, each of which weighs over a tonne! In a week you make only 11 km headway. At this rate, it will take a year to reach land – but you have less than two months' food! Shackleton gives up and tells you to set up camp on the ice. Eventually the ice will either melt or drift near land – if you don't starve first!

Handy hint



Eat the organs of freshly killed animals to avoid getting scurvy, a disease caused by lack of vitamin C.



Ice camping

What's on the menu?

DINNER

This is the same every day. It's either seal or penguin meat, if you're lucky. From the ship's stores, you managed to save only walnuts and onions – not exactly a balanced diet.



You abandon the first camp after a few weeks when the pack ice becomes unsafe. The second is called Patience Camp – and patience is certainly something you need, as camp life is deadly boring. The main activities are hunting and trying to keep warm. You kill seals for meat and use their blubber (fat) to fuel the stove. You have to keep a careful watch for fierce leopard seals, whose huge fangs could kill you in an attack. By March 1916, the camp has drifted so far north that you reach the edge of the pack ice region.



Your accommodation

PASSING TIME

In warmer weather you play cards in the tents. When it's very cold, you huddle in your reindeer-skin sleeping bags, but there aren't enough for everyone.

Handy hint



Build ice cairns and string up ropes between them to mark the edge of the camp. Now you can feel your way around in blizzards and not get lost.



You see, patience is a virtue!

Someone gag that man before I throttle him!

Journey to Elephant Island

The ice breaks up



ON THIN ICE

As the ice gets thinner, you can feel the swell of the waves beneath. All the bobbing up and down makes you seasick!

ON THE OCEAN WAVE

You launch the boats and sail north, rowing madly. Giant waves crash down on the boats and salty spray soaks you to the skin.



By April 1916, the ice has broken up enough for you to launch the three lifeboats. Shackleton decides to make for Elephant Island, 160 km to the north. Everyone is glad to be off the ice at last, but the journey is pretty scary. The little boats weave their way between towering icebergs that threaten to crush them into matchwood. Crashing waves could swamp the boats at any moment.



I've got you, lad!

ICY BATH

In the icy water, your shipmate will last only a few minutes. Shackleton comes to the rescue and yanks him to safety – a lucky escape!

You spend the whole journey wet to the bone, freezing and hungry. Some of your shipmates get frostbite. Each night you land, if there is a large slab of ice to camp on, but the thin ice is treacherous. One day, the ice splits right under the tents and one of your shipmates falls into the water in his sleeping bag!

ONE DAY'S RATION

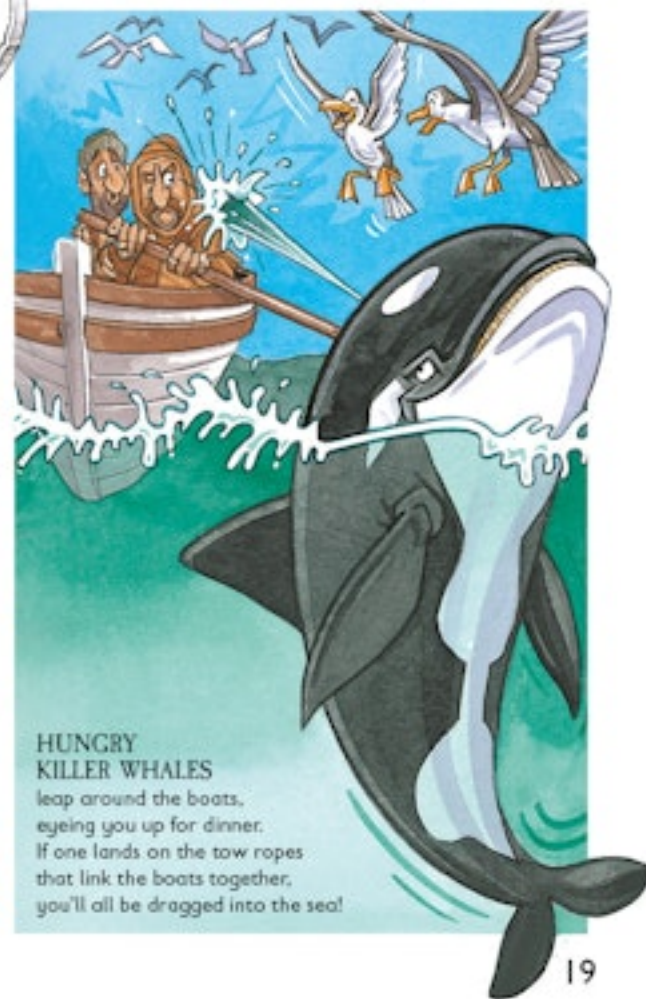
Your food for each day consists of one hot drink and a ship's biscuit. It doesn't get much tougher than this!



Phew! That was close!

Handy hint

Don't forget to bring 'land ice' with you to melt for drinking water. Sea ice is too salty to drink!



HUNGRY KILLER WHALES

leap around the boats, eyeing you up for dinner. If one lands on the tow ropes that link the boats together, you'll all be dragged into the sea!

Land at last



ELEPHANT ISLAND

The island you've reached has sheer cliffs and fresh water. There are colonies of seals and penguins (no elephants).



SAFE ON LAND

It's been 497 days since you last set foot on land! Some sailors bury their faces in the pebbles, sobbing. Others giggle hysterically.

HOT FOOD!

The cook has a brew-up on the beach. It's your first hot food and drink in days!

After a week at sea, everyone cheers when Elephant Island is finally spotted. In the crashing waves, it takes three hours just to find a place to land! As the boats crunch onto the beach, you leap into the surf and claw your way onto firm ground. You try to pitch the tents on the beach, but the wind rips them to shreds. You huddle under the upturned boats and fall asleep. Whaling ships never stop at Elephant Island and the nearest manned station is on South Georgia, hundreds of miles away – you're not home and dry yet.

Yikes!

Everyone under the boats!

Whoosh!

Build a hut with two upturned boats lashed together. Raise the boats on stone walls to make more room.

Handy hint



Off again in an open boat

With no rescue likely, Shackleton decides to make for South Georgia in the strongest lifeboat. The island lies 1,300 km away across the world's stormiest seas. He chooses a small team to go with him. You were an expert navigator on the way to Elephant Island, so Shackleton picks you, three sailors and the ship's carpenter.

Preparing the boat

You help the carpenter get the boat ready for launching. You raise the boat's sides with wooden planks and nail on a canvas decking.

WATERPROOFING

You seal the boat's seams with oil paint and seal blood. To keep the boat steady in high seas, you load it with 2 tonnes of rocks.

MEN OVERBOARD!

You set off from Elephant Island on 24 April 1916. As you launch the lifeboat, waves almost capsize her and two sailors tumble overboard. Your superstitious shipmates take this as a bad omen. The whole voyage is a long struggle to keep afloat. You spend your time working the pump and sails and bailing madly. It seems unlikely that you'll ever see the rest of the crew again.

Handy hint

Steer the boat by using a sextant. This takes measurements of the position of the sun or stars. In cloudy weather, it's hard to take any readings at all!

What a start!

OFF DUTY

You try to sleep under the decking, lying on the rocks in a rotting reindeer-skin bag. It is so cramped that it feels like being buried alive!

A speck in the ocean

It will be a miracle if you ever reach South Georgia. The island is a tiny speck in a huge ocean. It is almost impossible to plot your course accurately in a small, heaving boat, and if your measurements are out by even a fraction, you'll miss the island. Howling winds could sweep you into the open ocean, and the next landfall is Africa, 6,440 km away! One night, an enormous wave bears down on the boat. You are tossed around and a torrent of icy water almost sinks the boat, but everyone bails furiously and somehow you stay afloat. After two weeks at sea, you glimpse the black cliffs of South Georgia through the fog. You've made it! A hurricane nearly drives you onto the rocks, however, and it's another two days before you can land.



BAILING OUT

Fifteen-metre waves are common. When a big wave hits, everyone bails madly using any container he can find, as you fight to stay afloat.



YOUR RATIONS

These include a cup of hot soup twice a day. Salt gets into the drinking water, so everyone is very thirsty by the time you land!



SIGNS OF LAND

After fourteen wet, freezing-cold days, you spot seaweed floating on the water and then birds, which suggest that land is near at last.

Meanwhile...

ON ELEPHANT ISLAND

Your shipmates transform the upturned boats into a crude shelter, which they name the Snuggery. There is little room inside and the men are packed together. They survive on a diet of limpet and seaweed stew.



Over the mountains

The journey continues



After a week's rest, three of your shipmates are still too exhausted to move. You leave them resting under the upturned boat and set off by moonlight.



TOWERING CLIFFS

Icy glaciers and deep crevasses bar the way to the whaling station. You leap crevasses and cut steps in the ice using a carpentry tool as an ice axe. The rope tying you together is meant to keep you safe, but if one of you falls, he might pull the others down with him!

You spend a week on the beach on South Georgia, recovering from the journey. You've landed on the wrong side of the island, however, and the whaling station is still 240 km away by sea! A range of mountains lies between you and safety. Shackleton decides to make for the whaling station overland and picks you and one other sailor to go with him. You set off with a few days' rations stuffed in socks. Eventually, you discover a route through the mountains, only to find yourselves at the top of a huge snow slope as night falls. You've got to get down or you'll freeze to death! Using a coil of rope as a makeshift toboggan, you whizz down the slope at breakneck speed and land safely in a soft bank of snow.



To the rescue!

Early next morning, you hear the toot of the whaling station's whistle. Nine hours later, you stagger into the station. Your hair is long and matted and your faces are black with grime. The first people you meet are two boys who run away at the sight of you! The whalers welcome you and give you hot food and a comfortable bed. They rescue your shipmates on the beach and, later, you return for the men on Elephant Island. The expedition has been a disaster from start to finish, but, incredibly, everyone has survived!



Handy hint



Keep your spirits up! The men left on Elephant Island make lists of their favourite puddings and read aloud from a cookery book.

ERNEST SHACKLETON

He ends his days in Antarctica. Four years after your return to England, you head south with him on another expedition. He dies of a heart attack at South Georgia and is buried there.

RESCUE

Four months after you set off from Elephant Island, you return on a tugboat to rescue the marooned men. Amazingly enough, everyone is safe... and delighted to see you again!



Glossary

Antarctic The region in the far south of Earth, surrounding the South Pole.

Arctic The region in the far north of Earth, surrounding the North Pole.

Blizzard A storm with high winds blowing powdery snow.

Blubber The layer of fat found under the skin of seals and penguins. It keeps the animals warm and can be burned to provide light and heat.

Cairn A pile of stones or ice blocks, often built to mark paths or the summits of mountains.



Crevasse A deep crack in a glacier, sometimes hidden by snow.

Endurance The ability to withstand difficulties and stress for a long time. Also the name of Shackleton's ship.

Frostbite A condition caused by extreme cold, which destroys the tissues of the body. The ears, nose, toes and fingers are the areas most often affected by frostbite.

Glacier A river or large mass of ice, formed by packed-down snow. The ice in a glacier flows very slowly from high ground down towards the sea.

Hazardous Extremely dangerous.

Hull The body of a ship.

Husky A powerful breed of dog used in the Arctic and Antarctic for pulling sledges.



Limpet A type of mollusc, with a shell and a muscular foot, that clings to rocks in the sea.

Omen A happening or object believed to signal good or evil in the future.

Pack ice Large pieces of floating ice wedged together.

Rations A person's individual allowance of food and other supplies when there are shortages.

Rigging The ropes and wires attached to a ship's masts and sails.

Scurvy A disease, once common among sailors and polar explorers, caused by a lack of vitamin C.

Sextant An instrument used by sailors to calculate their position at sea. It works by taking measurements of the position of the sun and stars.

Stowaway A person who hides on board a ship so that he can travel for free.

Uncharted Not shown on any map.

Whaler A whale hunter or whaling ship.



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