

Shackleton's Endurance

Teaching Resources for Primary

Sections	Resources	Assembly Ideas
5. Staying Alive	Parallel Lives	Patience!

Shackleton Resources

These resources for primary pupils compliment the online book resource [‘Shackleton's Endurance’](#) which, tells the story of Shackleton's famous Trans- Antarctica Expedition. On this expedition, Shackleton's ship the Endurance was lost to the ice, yet Shackleton eventually got all of her crew home without a single loss of life. The book has six sections, and each is supported by a suite of teaching resources, teacher notes and ideas for assemblies.

The resources also draw on the contemporary Expedition ‘Endurance22’, sailing aboard the Agulhas II, with historian and media personality Dan Snow, which left Cape Town in February 2022 for the Weddell Sea to search for the wreck of Endurance. Through the ‘**Parallel Lives**’ strand, pupils can explore some of the differences between the two voyages, then and now.

There will be opportunities to dip in and sample resources from different lessons or start at the beginning and work your way through to build a coherent and longer unit of work. Ideas are provided for both KS1 and KS2.

- 1: The Expedition
2. The Crew and Boats
3. Setting out
4. Abandon Ship
- 5. Staying Alive**
6. Uncharted

5 Staying Alive

Key Questions

- Where are they?
- How would they stay alive?
- Where were they going and why?
- What kind of place was this?
- How was Shackleton feeling and why?

Getting Started

Recap the story so far and the teaching ideas from section 4. In Chapter 4 the crew watched the Endurance break up as the ice pressed in on her until the men were forced to abandon ship. Shortly afterwards they watched her sink. This meant they were now marooned with a quantity of food and essential possessions, including tents, that they had rescued from the ship, along with the dogs and Mrs Chippy the cat. They also had three lifeboats with them. Everything else on the ship had sank.

The crew members were now on ice that was drifting away from the South Pole, this was because of the clockwise movement of the gyre in the Weddell Sea and the prevailing wind direction, taking them northwards.

Explain that you are going to be investigating what happened to Shackleton's team as they tried to stay alive following the loss of their ship. Establish some of the key parts of the story and have a brief discussion about how the team, especially Shackleton must be feeling at this point.

Highlight some of the concerns voiced by pupils. Some of these could be turned into enquiry questions e.g. 'How did they stay alive?'

Although things seemed bleak, there are some positives in the story. Can pupils come up with any? For example:

1. They had some food supplies left and had previously been catching lots of seal.
2. They had the company of dogs to pull sleds
3. It was the beginning of Antarctic summer which meant that temperatures would be improving slightly, there was lots of daylight and food sources, such as seals, would be returning to these waters from further north.
4. Importantly, they had lifeboats which they had rescued from the ship, although these were hand -rowed and simple vessels.
5. None of the crew had been lost or badly injured at this point.

These sound like good things but when you read some of the evidence from crew's diaries and from Shackleton himself, you realise that the situation was more complex. Below are the positive comments with additional negative comments in italics below.

1. They had some food supplies left and had previously been catching lots of seal.
There was a point when there were no or little seals to be caught and food was even more scarce.
2. They had the company of dogs to pull sleds.
It came to the point when the sleds and boats could no longer be moved by dogs as the ice was too difficult to traverse. Although good company, the dogs needed feeding too and they took up valuable food resources. Shackleton ordered them to be shot, along with the ship's cat Mrs Chippy. (Mrs Chippy was a Tom cat, wrongly identified as female).
3. It was the beginning of Antarctic summer which meant that temperatures would be improving slightly, there was lots of daylight and food sources, such as seals, would be returning to these waters from further north.
Although true that the warmer weather brought seals back, the warmer weather also turned the top layer of ice to slush making progress over the ice, especially dragging the boats, almost impossible. Shackleton decided to initially travel at night when it was cooler and the ice firmer. The summer gave almost 24 hour light.
4. Importantly, they had lifeboats which they had rescued from the ship, although these were hand -rowed and simple vessels.

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The boats were in need of work and repair to withstand what could be a long and perilous journey. Some of the crew slept in them for a while away from the wet and slushy ice. However, as the ice was still too densely packed to try and launch the boats, they could not be used straight away and had to be hauled over the ice floes as the crew made their way towards what they hoped would be land.

5. None of the crew had been lost or badly injured at this point.

The crew were still in good shape all things considered but they were living on an almost complete diet of meat and blubber which gave many of them constipation and belly ache. Their eyes watered from the cold constantly and dripped down forming ice on the edge of their noses. When these icicles were knocked off they took skin with it, leaving the men's faces raw and chapped. Shackleton himself had bad sciatica and took to his tent for a while.

Possible Activities

1. What does the map tell us?

The map shows part of the route that Shackleton's crew took in the Weddell Sea and has a range of information on it. It can be used to show where they are on this journey and explain the part of the journey relating to this section of the learning which is from the sinking of the Endurance to Elephant Island. Worksheet 5_1 has some questions that pupils could answer individually after a class discussion and recap. Most of the questions can be answered by using the map as a source of information eg a question about whether Endurance sank south or north of the Antarctic Circle.

(Slide 3 and 4. Worksheet 5.1 and 5.1 Answers)

However, some questions require some deeper and more careful thinking, drawing on what was learned previously. For example, a question about the direction of the drifting ice requires memory of the Weddell Sea gyre and knowing that the wind direction affects the movement of the pack ice.

Pupils will also need to apply their thinking to how seasonal change happens in the Antarctic and when, along with an understanding of why and when the ice melt is likely to be greatest (the end of the summer period in March - April). Suggested whole sentence answers are provided. This activity can be a good assessment point to check how well pupils are beginning to apply their knowledge and also, how well they can interpret what the map is showing them.

Challenge children to use the map extract on Slide 3 to ask some more questions not already covered.

2. How many camps did Shackleton have?

Ask pupils to investigate the different camps and the stages of the journey they represented. For example, when the boat was first stranded, they got as much equipment off the ship as they needed and created a rather untidy 'Dump Camp'. Because the ice floe was unstable, Shackleton ordered them to move further away to a more stable area of ice. This became known as 'Ocean Camp'. They were camped there when the Endurance sank. After a while, they struck out to get closer to land, dragging their equipment with them. But they were defeated by the difficult, uneven terrain of the ice and its sometimes melted surface. They realised they would need to make a more permanent camp on one of the bigger and safer floes and wait for the ice to melt enough to launch the boats. This was Patience Camp. Slide 5 sets out a timeline.

6. Then and now

Global ice cover is a key indicator of global climate change. However, sea ice is declining faster in the Arctic due to global heating than in the Antarctic. ([Sea Ice Research - Endurance22](#)). In KS1 children will learn that the Arctic is an area of ocean, much of it frozen, surrounded by land masses; and that the Antarctic is dominated by a large icy continent surrounded by ocean. The significant differences in geography between the two polar regions partially helps to explain the different impacts they experience due to global heating. The Weddell Sea ice is the only region where you have a significant area of multi-year ice in Antarctica.

There is a separate 'Then and Now' presentation which has a selection of facts about ice taken from the [Sea Ice Research - Endurance22](#) website.

Slide 3 asks if statements are true or false. They are all true and informed by the Endurance 22 website. KS2 can think about and discuss the impact of melting ice on global temperatures after thinking of it as a mirror reflecting energy back into space.

Slide 4 shows the average Sea Ice Concentration of February 15 (2017-2021). It also gives the last known position of Endurance. Discuss with children, using the key, where the ice is most concentrated. Remind them again about the difference between sea ice and ice shelves. Several ice shelves are named on the map – can the children find them. Remind the children again that February is the end of Antarctic summer and that temperatures will soon fall again as they experience the winter season. Activity 5_worksheet_3 challenges children to use the given map and / or their atlases or digital maps, to match the ice shelf to the longitude and latitude given. This activity will help children practise finding latitude and longitude on a map to locate features. Use the map on the slide to model labelling the lines of latitude and longitude that are not obviously numbered. Remind children to check the intervals between the numbering for both to understand the sequence, ie the lines of latitude are given in intervals of 2° and the lines of longitude in intervals of 5°.

Ask children to explain the difference between ice shelves and sea ice. *Sea ice is frozen seawater that floats on the ocean surface. Ice shelf is a floating tongue of ice that extends from land and floats on the water.*

Slide 5 shows scientists taking ice cores. These show how the ice has changed over time and give information about past and current climate change. Discuss the work of scientists today in the Antarctic and how they are different to the time of Shackleton. Make a list of pupils' ideas. These may include:

- Highly technical clothes, boots, hats to keep scientists warm and dry.
- Highly technical equipment, from satellites to specialised computers that help scientists monitor and record accurate maps, ice, changes etc.
- Communication that enables messages to be sent and received quickly from anywhere in the world.
- Better transport equipment from helicopters to undersea survey vehicles, planes and stronger ships.
- An awareness of global heating and how the climate is rapidly changing.

Taking it further

Slide 23 gives Shackleton's list of essential qualities. These have been used in earlier lesson ideas and assemblies to explore the qualities of an explorer. Ask children to discuss these again and identify evidence of how Shackleton and his men have met each of the five suggested qualities.



You could give each of five groups one of the qualities and ask them to find an example using evidence about the crew's behaviour from the extracts from Shackleton's story and what the photographs tell us.

See the assembly ideas too.

Vocabulary: see the PowerPoint for glossaries.

Curriculum Links

Geography

Key stage 1

Pupils should develop knowledge about the world, the United Kingdom and their locality. They should understand basic subject-specific vocabulary relating to human and physical geography and begin to use geographical skills, including mapping, to enhance their locational awareness.

Pupils should be taught to:

Locational knowledge

- name and locate the world's seven continents and five oceans

Human and physical geography

- Identify the location of hot and cold areas of the world in relation to the Equator and the North and South Poles.
- use basic geographical vocabulary
- understand that there are different patterns of weather associated with seasons.

Key Stage 2

Locational knowledge

- locate the world's countries,
- identify the position and significance of latitude, longitude, Equator, Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere, Arctic and Antarctic Circle.

History

Key stage 1

Pupils should develop an awareness of the past, using common words and phrases relating to the passing of time.

- know where the people and events they study fit within a chronological framework and identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods.
- use a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms.
- ask and answer questions, choosing and using parts of stories and other sources to show that they know and understand key features of events.
- understand some of the ways in which we find out about the past and identify different ways in which it is represented.

Pupils should be taught about:

- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally

- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements. Some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods.

Key Stage 2

Pupils should continue to develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local and world history, establishing clear narratives within and across the periods they study. They should note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms. They should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance. They should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.

Pupils should be taught about:

- a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066

Links to other Areas of learning

English: speaking and listening, opportunities for reports, creative writing and descriptive writing, diaries, letters, lists and labels.

Mathematics: opportunities to measure, record, and to create and present data

Art and Design: know how art and design both reflect and shape our history, and contribute to the culture, creativity and wealth of our nation. Develop own ideas and techniques for drawing and painting.

Web Links

- Antarctica Map to download <https://www.rgs.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?nodequid=529585fb-6259-4ffd-963e-7afec394e97f&lang=en-GB>
- Changing Sea Ice <https://www.asoc.org/learn/changing-sea-ice/>
- Endurance22 Expedition <https://endurance22.org/>
- Endurance22 Royal Geographical Society - What we do (rgs.org) <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/what-we-do/teachers/endurance22/>
- Google maps www.google.co.uk/maps
- Google Earth <https://earth.google.com/web/>
- Subject Animation Shackleton [Royal Geographical Society - Geography resources for teachers \(rgs.org\) https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/subject-knowledge-animation-shackleton/](https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/subject-knowledge-animation-shackleton/)
- Teaching about Shackleton <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/what-we-do/teachers/endurance22/>
- Earnest Shackleton as a significant individual <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/teaching-ernest-shackleton-as-a-significant-indivi/>
- Southern hemisphere sea ice extent <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299104/southern-hemisphere-sea-ice-extent/>
- Understanding climate and the extent of the sea ice in Antarctica [Understanding climate: Antarctic sea ice extent | NOAA Climate.gov](https://www.noaa.gov/understanding-climate-antarctic-sea-ice-extent/)
- Weddell Sea gyre <https://interactives.rgs.org/antarctic-gyre/>



- [How Antarctica Has Changed since Shackleton's 1915 Shipwreck - Scientific American](#)

South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition (1914-1917) by Sir Ernest Shackleton (Author)
[South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition, 1914-1917 by Shackleton - Free Ebook \(gutenberg.org\)](#)