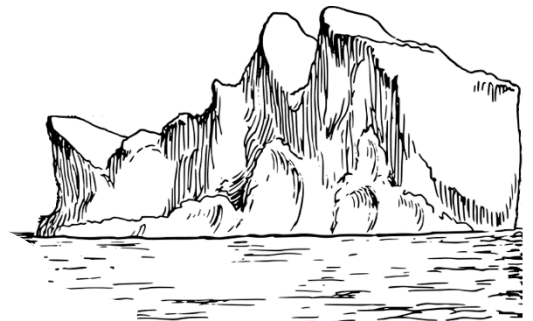
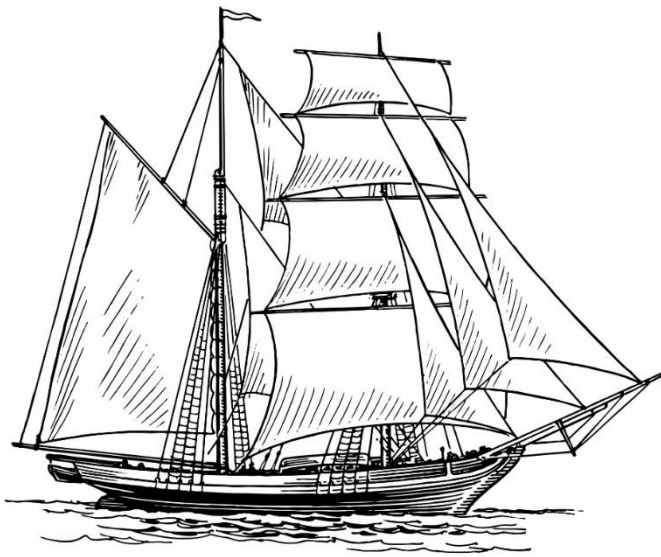


Deepening Understanding

YR6 Journal Text

A Diary in the Role of Ernest Shackleton

Ernest Shackleton was a polar explorer who led three British Expeditions to the continent of Antarctica. This diary (recreated by Laura Curtis) captures part of his quest to achieve the first land crossing of the Antarctic. However, disaster strikes on route!



8th May 1916

Dear Companion,

After a long fifteen days at sea, where we had been surrounded by floes that glittered like endless ice-white fields and sick of being tossed about by the gale-swept seas, we finally saw land; I couldn't believe my eyes at first. Despite being over 2000km away from the mainland of Antarctica, we looked at each other with optimism - up ahead was the remote yet inhospitable island of South Georgia. I scanned the horizon searching for a place to land but a howling wind started to rock our boat from side to side: it was too dangerous to move. We had no choice - we were forced to ride the rocky waves until the storm had passed.



9th May 1916

Dear Companion,

I write this entry with relief still flowing in my blood: a full force hurricane struck overnight and we feared our boat would be capsized by the mighty waves. The hurricane came upon us so suddenly, so forcefully, it was like nature was playing a cruel trick on us. However, with the breaking of dawn, the wind died down. It is by a sheer miracle - or blessed fortune - that we are still here to record the event: I had feared that we would be wrecked on the very coast we had sailed so far to reach.

With the glow of the morning sun casting a rosy hue on the snow-capped mountains, we spotted a sheltered cove; after a few hard tugs on our oars the hull of the boat finally cut into the sand. It was such a splendid feeling to feel the welcome touch of solid land once more. However, the boat was too damaged to carry on (the hull had been splintered by the ice) and the nearest whaling station was on the opposite side of the island. If we wanted to be rescued, we had no other option: we had to attempt the crossing on foot.

20th May 1916

Dear Companion,

Yesterday was tough: we spent the whole day crossing the rocky, slippery terrain of South Georgia Island. With wood screws from the boat fastened to our shoes for grip and after months of wear our clothing only providing minimal warmth and comfort, Worsley, Crean and I set out again. We had little gear: three days of provisions; a compass, that I had salvaged before the ship sunk; three carpenter's poles, that we used to aid our ascent; and finally, a coil of rope. If we were to survive, I knew that we would be the first human beings to ever cross this island... As always, I had hope.



The journey was immensely difficult but our strength and belief in each other kept us united. Last night, we had to face a steep climb up a jagged rock face. Upon reaching the summit I gazed around; I didn't like our position at all. I knew immediately that we had to continue: we would be frozen to death upon the peak if we couldn't reach lower ground. I skimmed the lower slopes for potential hazards (of course there were hundreds) but I had to take the risk. With the rope coiled around our waists - uniting us into a human toboggan - we jumped into the air and slid terrifyingly as well as hair-raisingly fast down the icy slope. It felt exhilarating and the hairs stood up on our arms. For those few brief moments we forgot our peril and were actually able to enjoy ourselves. Upon our arrival at the bottom of the slope, we took a sharp intake of breath and felt only one thing - relief! Overwhelmed, we realised that we had descended 1,500 feet in three minutes. Our trousers had been reduced to tatters by the descent but we had survived.

After a day and a half of clambering over ice-covered, rocky mountains we ascended a slope, not daring to believe that the end was in sight... to our immense relief we simply stared. Could it be? For there before us, in the distance but definitely there all the same, was the recognisable outline of the whaling station. With my heart almost stilled in anticipation, we waited in silence: would the work whistle be blown? Eagerly, I listened as the shrill sound of the steam whistle rang out, which settled my mind in a flash. It was like music to my ears - this was the first sound from the outside world I had heard in months. I knew it would take a couple of hours to reach our final destination but we could do it - we were nearly there. For over a year and a half, we had been exposed to the most bitter elements and terrain known to man and survived.

When we arrived, an old Norwegian whaler took us to the station manager's home. "What is your name?" asked the man. He clearly had no idea who I was underneath my dirty, rugged beard.

I replied, "My name is Shackleton".

