

Arctic Disaster!

People who tried to explore the Arctic

Imagine driving a dogsled across dangerous Arctic ice. Cold wind bites at your face. Your fingers are frozen. It's snowing so hard you can barely see the black ears of your dog. The temperature is fifty below zero. You're lost. What do you do?

Modern Arctic explorers can radio for help in emergencies.

Helicopters can swoop in and rescue them. Many early Western explorers went to the Arctic to map it or look for passageways to improve trade. But they were on their own when they became lost or stranded.

The history of polar exploration is full of disasters. One of the first occurred in 1553, when Englishman Sir Hugh Willoughby and his crew died after their boat was blocked by ice. They didn't have the proper clothing or food to survive the winter. Today's explorers can choose from high-tech, waterproof fabrics that protect the skin from damaging cold. Special boots protect toes from frostbite. But early explorers usually wore leather boots. Sometimes their feet got so numb their socks would burn before they felt the heat of a fire!

Food and vitamins were another problem. The freeze-dried foods, nutrition bars, and vitamins of today weren't available. Explorers often suffered from *scurvy*, a painful disease caused by the lack of vitamin C.

The most famous Arctic disaster was the Franklin expedition. In 1845 Sir John Franklin set out from England with two of the best ships available. When Franklin vanished, at least 40 search parties were sent out. Eventually the remains of the party were found. Some of the men had died from cold or starvation. Scientists now believe some of the men were poisoned from eating tins of food that weren't prepared properly.

The thick pack ice of the Arctic also caused serious problems for early expeditions. Many explorers had to continue by foot when their boats were crushed by ice. Today, boats are equipped with thick steel hulls to cut through ice. Modern technology can also locate dangerous icebergs. And, now that the area has been mapped, there's less danger of getting lost.

Robert E. Peary and Matthew Henson, who discovered the North Pole in 1909, were two of the most successful Arctic explorers. Their secret? They spent years living with and learning from the native people, the Inuit. Peary and Henson traveled on sleds like the Inuit, wore the same fur boots and parkas, slept in igloos, and learned to hunt and eat the same foods. Their respect for the Inuit way of life helped save their lives.



Robert E. Peary



Matthew Henson

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read “Arctic Disaster!” Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question. Use your answers to solve the riddle below.

1. What is this article mainly about?
 - A. what to wear and eat in the Arctic
 - B. ships used for Arctic exploration
 - C. who discovered the North Pole
 - D. the history of polar exploration
2. When were Sir Hugh Willoughby and his crew stranded in the Arctic?
 - E. 1999
 - F. 1845
 - G. 1909
 - H. 1553
3. In paragraph two, what does the word *stranded* mean?
 - I. not sitting
 - J. drowned
 - K. needed supplies
 - L. left somewhere without a way of getting out
4. Why couldn't Willoughby's and Franklin's crews be saved?
 - M. They didn't wear the right shoes.
 - N. They were too cold to call for help.
 - O. Airplanes and radios had not been invented yet.
 - P. They were far from home.
5. Which of the following did Peary and Henson **not** learn from the Inuit?
 - Q. how to hunt for food
 - R. how to avoid dangerous icebergs
 - S. how to travel on sleds
 - T. what kind of fur boots to wear
6. What does *polar exploration* mean?
 - U. exploring the people of Poland
 - V. traveling through ice
 - W. exploring the North and South Poles
 - X. searching for big, white bears
7. What three kinds of transportation are mentioned in the article?
 - A. canoes, boats, airplanes
 - B. dogsleds, skis, airplanes
 - C. dogsleds, ships, helicopters
 - D. snowmobiles, boats, canoes
8. Another good title for this article is
 - E. “Early Arctic Exploration.”
 - F. “Modern Technology Helps Ships.”
 - G. “Discovering the North Pole.”
 - H. “No Telephones in the Arctic.”

Bonus: Match the number under each line with the questions you just answered. Write the letter of your answer to that question on the line. You will spell out the answer to the riddle below.

What is the difference between the North Pole and the South Pole?

The

 6 2 4 3 8 6 4 5 3 1

ANSWERS

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1. D 2. H 3. L 4. O 5. R 6. W 7. C 8. E

Bonus: The whole world