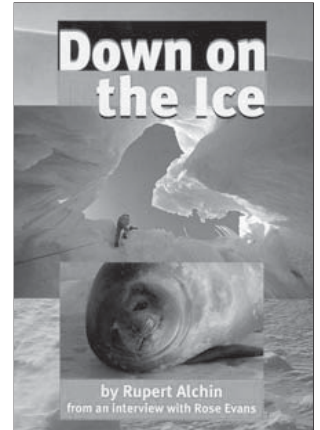


Down on the Ice

by Rupert Alchin



Book Summary

This recount is taken from an interview with conservationist Rose Evans who spent three weeks in the Antarctic studying a hut built there by the famous British explorer, Robert Scott. The text includes some of the history of Scott's expedition, an account of Rose's preparations for her adventure, and descriptions of life on the ice and of the animals of the region.

Features of the Book

- The use of historic photographs
- Additional information in captions
- Dramatic photographs
- The use of maps
- Similes – *like big green fridges joined by tubes; like diving down to the Titanic*
- The use of photographic backgrounds to give atmosphere
- Specialized vocabulary – *frostbite, wanigan, wilderness, blizzard, crevasse*

Purpose

Down on the Ice can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** using graphic aids, such as maps and graphs, to convey information;
- S** exploring specialized vocabulary;
- S** describing the mental images evoked by texts;
- S** raising questions from information gathered;
- S** using electronic media to research a topic.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Using graphic aids, such as maps and graphs, to convey information
- S** Exploring specialized vocabulary

Introducing the text

You may wish to give your students the opportunity to look through a range of informational texts on Antarctica and its wildlife before introducing the book to them. This will allow you to discuss some of the vocabulary they will meet in the text and help to set the scene in terms of landscape and weather.

Look at the cover of the book together and discuss the title.

- *What do you think this book could be about?*
- *Where do you think the ice in the title might be?*

Read the blurb on the back cover to confirm or correct predictions.

Find Antarctica on a map or globe and discuss its position in relation to other countries that the students are familiar with.

- *What kind of weather would you expect to find there?*
Would it be cold all the time?
- *What dangers might there be?*

Encourage the students to discuss their ideas.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read the first chapter of the book. You could ask them:

- *In what ways is information presented in this book? (captions, text, map, photographs, extract from a letter)*
- *How do you think Rose Evans would have felt about going to Antarctica?*
- *What kinds of things might she have been concerned about?*

The first chapter is longer than the others and includes historical information about Robert Scott. After the students have finished reading, encourage them to discuss this “story within a story” and how Scott and his men felt about the events they experienced.

- *How do the photographs help you to understand what it might have been like for Scott and his men?*
- *How do you think things would have been different for explorers in those days?*
- *What kind of equipment would they have used? How would it compare with the equipment of modern-day explorers?*

When you feel that the students have a sense of the isolation of Antarctica and understand any concepts or vocabulary they were unsure of, ask them to read the rest of the text independently.

- *As you read, think about the way Rose Evans describes her experiences. Use a sticky note to mark one description that you really like.*



Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

S Describing the mental images evoked by texts

In the text, descriptive language and similes are used to create mental images in the mind of the reader. Reread the book together, looking for examples of this kind of language. For example: “It’s so cold down there, and you feel really tired all the time.”

“It’s a bit like following a giant hen around, pecking at the ice.”

“The buildings looked like big factories.”


“Going into the hut was like stepping back in time.”

“I looked like an 800-year-old racoon.”

S Raising questions from information gathered

The presence of people in a wilderness such as Antarctica raises questions about the effect of human activity on the environment. The students could discuss examples of ways that people have damaged the environment. Try to draw out examples that have occurred locally.

Continue this discussion by looking at ways that the Antarctic environment could be endangered. Ask the students to justify their answers. They could set their arguments out under different categories, such as wildlife, the land, and important landmarks (such as Scott’s hut), and list possible effects on each of these.

 They could use the blackline master on page 81 to summarize their ideas.

S Using electronic media to research a topic

Suggest that the students use the Internet to research Antarctica and Antarctic expeditions. They could try the following address to begin with: <http://antarctica.computerworld.com>