

READING A CHRONOLOGY

THE POLE AT LAST!

Some humans—we call them explorers—will always be bound and determined to be the first to get to the farthest places imaginable. On the surface of Earth, no places are farther than the

North Pole in the Arctic and the South Pole in the Antarctic. Below is a brief chronology of polar exploration. Read it, then answer the questions that follow.

4th century B.C. A Greek sailor named Pytheas explores the northern seas and describes a place he calls Thule. Some historians think that Thule may have been as far north as Iceland or Norway.

9th century A.D. Viking explorers from Northern Europe settle Iceland and parts of Greenland—the first Europeans known to do so.

1800s. The British Navy begins sending expeditions to find a Northwest Passage—a sea route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans north of Canada. Sailors trying to reach the North Pole by sea find that it can't be done, because the Arctic Ocean surrounding the pole has a permanent cover of ice.

1820. Three explorers, on separate voyages, become the first to see the continent of Antarctica: Edward Bransfield, from Great Britain; Nathaniel Brown Palmer, from the U.S.; and Fabian von Bellingshausen, a Russian.

1893-1894. American explorers Robert E. Peary and Matthew A. Henson make their first attempt to reach the North Pole on land from Greenland by sled. From the native Inuit, they learn how to properly use and care for the dogs they rely on to pull the sleds.

April 6, 1909. On their third Arctic expedition, Peary and Henson, accompanied by four Inuit, finally reach their goal. "The Pole at last," Peary writes in his journal.

May 12, 1909. A team of explorers—Norwegian Roald Amundsen, American Lincoln Ellsworth, and Italian Umberto Nobile—crosses the North Pole in a dirigible (balloonlike airship).

December 14, 1911: Roald Amundsen and his team are the first to reach the South Pole. They beat a group led by British explorer Robert Falcon Scott by five weeks. Scott and his men, relying on ponies rather than dogs, die on the return trip.

August 4, 1914: Waiting in Plymouth, England, for the OK from the British government to begin an expedition to cross Antarctica on foot, Sir Ernest Shackleton receives a one-word telegram: *Proceed*. The mission is a failure, and he won't return home until May 1917.

1958. An expedition led by British geologist Vivian Fuchs is the first to accomplish Shackleton's goal, crossing Antarctica by land.

QUESTIONS

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Who are the earliest Europeans known to have explored Greenland?
2. Were the first explorers able to sail to the North Pole? Explain.
3. What transportation did Robert Peary and Matthew Henson use to get to the North Pole?
4. What did Robert Falcon Scott and his party lack in their exploration of Antarctica that proved fatal?
5. Who is the only person mentioned here to have explored both the North and South poles?
6. Who proved to be very helpful to explorers Peary and Henson?
7. True or false? The Greek sailor Pytheas was the first to reach the North Pole.
8. What was Sir Ernest Shackleton's ambition?
9. How many years passed from the beginning of Shackleton's voyage until his goal was accomplished by someone else?
10. What qualities do you think it takes to be an explorer? Do you think journeys like these are worthwhile? Explain.