Teachers’ Information Sheet by Nicky Milsted

It is 1914. The book follows the story of famous explorer Ernest Shackleton and his crew on the *Endurance* as they undertake an expedition to try to complete the first overland crossing of the icy and inhospitable continent of Antarctica via the South Pole. Their planned route takes them from a landing point on the coast of Antarctica in the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea. The crossing will be dangerous, cold and immensely hard work. The intention is to drag sledges laden with supplies across the vast icy unmapped wilderness for around 3,330km!

The story of the expedition is told through one of Shackleton’s crew, an experienced sailor called Frank Worsley who is the captain of the ship. *Endurance* sets sail in August 1914; the start of the expedition coinciding with the start of World War One.

After sailing south for four months, *Endurance* enters the Weddell Sea in December 1914 and becomes ice bound in January 1915. The crew cannot force their way through to make landfall. The ship and men are stuck fast – for ten long months! And what is more, the ice is pulling the ship in the wrong direction, away from the coast of Antarctica. In November 1915, after being destroyed by the pressure of the ice, *Endurance* sinks and the crew are marooned. After an aborted attempt to drag the ship’s lifeboats to the nearest land 650km away, Shackleton decides that the only option is to set up camp on the ice and drift with it – hopefully towards land.

In April 1916, the ice finally breaks up and the crew are able to launch the three lifeboats that were saved from *Endurance*. They head north, to Elephant Island; 15 months after first becoming stuck in the ice, the crew is finally on land again! But they are far from safe. The nearest manned whaling station is still around 1,500km away. A small team, led by Shackleton, take to the rough seas in one of the open lifeboats to try to reach South Georgia, where the whaling station is located. It is a perilous crossing, but 16 days later they land – albeit on the wrong side! – on South Georgia. The final leg of the journey, crossing South Georgia to the whaling station on foot, is made by Shackleton and two crew mates. They then return to rescue the crew mates left on the beach on the other side of South Georgia. Later, when conditions allow in August 1916, the men who remained on Elephant Island are also rescued – over two years since the expedition set sail. Amazingly everyone survives, but it is clear that *You Wouldn’t Want to Be on Shackleton’s Polar Expedition!*
About Ernest Shackleton and polar exploration

Ernest Shackleton was born in County Kildare near Dublin in Ireland in February 1874. At the age of ten, he moved with the rest of his family to south London, where he went to school at Dulwich College.

Shackleton left school aged 16, and went to sea aboard a sailing ship of the North Western Shipping Company. After eleven years aboard a variety of ships, he rose through the ranks and joined the expedition crew of Robert Falcon Scott’s National Antarctic Expedition as third officer. The expedition, which took place between 1901 and 1903, was known as the Discovery expedition after the ship, Discovery. During the expedition, Shackleton was part of a three-man team (alongside Scott and scientist Edward Wilson) who undertook a journey on foot to try to reach the highest possible latitude in the direction of the South Pole. At the time, they achieved the southern-most trek, reaching a mark 480km (300 miles) further south than anyone had previously reached, which was 770km (480 miles) from the South Pole.

Shackleton returned to Antarctica leading the Nimrod expedition (1907–1909). During this expedition, Shackleton accompanied by Jameson Adams, Eric Marshall and Frank Wild, reached a point even further south than that achieved on the Discovery expedition. They were attempting to be the first team to reach the South Pole; they fell short, but by just 180km (112 miles). At the time, this was the closest that anyone had got to either of the poles.

The next British-led assault on the South Pole was led by Scott; the Terra Nova Expedition (1910–13). Their attempt to reach the Pole first was thwarted by a Norwegian explorer called Roald Amundsen. His team sailed to Antarctica aboard a ship called Fram and their five-man group reached the Pole on 14 December 1911. Scott’s team, meanwhile, did reach the South Pole in January 1912 – just 33 days behind Amundsen. However, all of Scott’s team – Edgar Evans, Edward Wilson, Lawrence Oates, Henry Bowers and Scott himself – died on their attempt to return to their base camp.

Shackleton’s Endurance expedition, as described in You Wouldn’t Want to Be on Shackleton’s Polar Expedition, followed Scott’s ill-fated polar adventure, and was the first expedition to attempt an overland crossing of the continent of Antarctica.

Shackleton returned to Antarctica in 1921, leading the Quest expedition. He died of a heart attack at South Georgia in 1922 and is buried there. His death marked the end of the so-called Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.

Activity 1: About the Endurance expedition

The introduction above gives a good overview of Shackleton’s expedition in Endurance. There are comprehension questions and maths challenges linked to some of these facts on the activity sheets.
Activity 2: Expedition advert

It is reported that Shackleton placed an advert in *The Times* newspaper saying:

‘Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.’

However no one has been able to prove that this advert actually existed!

Challenge your pupils to design a poster or advert to encourage men to join the expedition.

*Extension activity:* The expedition is over-subscribed. Appoint a panel of pupils as members of the expedition, including Shackleton and Captain Frank Worsley, and ask them to conduct job interviews of the potential candidates. You could ask the candidates to prepare a CV or complete a job application form; the panel should decide on the questions to ask the candidates. What characteristics are they looking for in their expedition crew?

Activity 3: A crew member’s diary extract

Many of the men on the *Endurance* expedition wrote diaries during their two-year long ordeal. For many this was a way of passing the time. Challenge your pupils to create a diary extract – or series of diary extracts – from the point of view of a member of the expedition crew.

They could choose to write about Patience Camp on the ice, where the main activities were hunting for food (seal meat and penguin was on the menu if the hunting was good!), trying to keep warm, and filling the time with games of cards and songs.

Perhaps they would like to write their diary extract as one of the men who was left on Elephant Island after the small team led by Shackleton set off in the small lifeboat *James Caird*. These men improvised a shelter made from the remaining two lifeboats upturned on low stone walls and covered with canvas – it was nicknamed the ‘Snuggery’! These men were stranded on Elephant Island for four months; how might their diary extracts have changed over the course of this time? One of the men left on Elephant Island, Thomas Orde-Lees, even wrote in his diary that they would have to eat the first person from the party who died.

Or they could choose to write from the point of view of one of the men involved in the perilous crossing to South Georgia in the *James Caird*; this team of intrepid and brave men endured a 16-day battle in the tiny 6.85m-long open lifeboat across some of the roughest seas and biggest waves that Shackleton had ever experienced in his life at sea.

*Extension activity:* A photograph of *Endurance* stuck in the ice is reproduced on the activity sheet. This will help your pupils to imagine what the conditions were actually like. Can they come up with a series of adjectives to describe the scene?
Activity 4: A song on the ice

One of the crew members’ possessions rescued from Endurance before she sank was the ship’s banjo! It was played by crew member Leonard Hussey, who was a meteorologist on the expedition.

Hussey’s banjo played a vital role in keeping the crew members’ spirits up – according to Shackleton it provided “vital mental medicine”.

Challenge your pupils to compose a song that might have been played by Leonard Hussey on the ship’s banjo during the long months spent marooned on the ice. Can they compose both lyrics and a tune for their song?

Talking point: what sorts of songs do your pupils think the crew would have sung? Do your pupils think that they would have sung funny songs, sad songs, lonely songs, or hopeful songs?

Why not try... putting on a concert or performance of your pupils’ expedition songs?

Activity 5: Card games

Whilst marooned on the ice, Shackleton’s crew played endless games with a pack of cards to try and pass the time.

Talking point: what card games do your pupils know? Have they played snap? Do they know any simple games of whist where higher cards beat lower value cards in ‘tricks’? Have they played collecting card games where the aim is to build sets of matching cards or cards in an ascending run in the same suit?

Split your class into small groups to create their own card games. They need to decide how many players can be involved in the game, how many cards they will be dealt each, and discuss the rules and aims of their game between themselves – how is the winner decided? Each group should also give their new card game a name.

Each group should work together to write a set of rules to their game. Can the groups follow the rules written by another group and play each other’s card games?

Why not try... playing card games that you know with your class. Does playing these games help your pupils to create their own card games?

Extension activity: encourage your pupils to design and make their own packs of playing cards with a polar theme.
Activity 6: Design your own polar expedition clothing

In *You Wouldn’t Want to Be on Shackleton’s Polar Expedition*, the crew members’ clothing is described as consisting of long underwear and thick socks with a pullover and trousers on top, a windbreaker jacket, woollen hat, gloves and heavy boots.

Challenge your pupils to research 21st-century expedition clothing and design their own outfit to undertake a modern polar expedition. Can they create a labelled diagram of their outfit explaining why they have chosen the clothing and accessories that they have included? You could look at the properties of different types of modern materials and compare these to the types of materials that were available in 1914 when Shackleton’s team began their expedition.

Extension activity: after designing the clothing for their expedition, your more able pupils may like to research other equipment that they feel would be useful on the journey. Are there any modern gadgets or items of technology that would help in a polar exploration?

Activity 7: Back in civilisation and in the news

For the duration of the ill-fated *Endurance* expedition, World War One was raging across Europe and beyond. The crew members were out of touch with civilisation from December 1914 until May 1916 and had no knowledge of how the War was progressing.

*Talking point*: ask your pupils to imagine that they were part of the rescued expedition party. How do they think that the crew members would have felt on their return to civilisation? How might the expedition party have reacted to information about the War? What emotions might the expedition party have felt?

The recovery of the expedition crew of *Endurance* was a huge news story, and it actually briefly overtook War news on the front pages of British newspapers in June 1916. Challenge your pupils to create a newspaper front page featuring the story.

Your pupils should carefully plan their article before writing it. What facts are important to include? Are there any quotes that could make the story more interesting? Look at how newspaper articles are structured. Often the most important facts are in the first paragraph – the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ of the story.

*Extension activity*: you could pick a number of your more able pupils to act as members of the expedition crew, including Shackleton himself, and to research more about them using the internet or other resources. Once the ‘crew’ have completed their research, allow the rest of your pupils to be newspaper reporters interviewing them. Can they use some of the quotes and information from the interviews in their newspaper reports?
Activity 8: Exciting expeditions

Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition was incredibly ambitious. Challenge your pupils to design their own expedition. Where would they like to explore? Would they like to go into space? Or journey to the centre of the earth? Would a trip to a remote jungle be their choice? Or would they rather attempt to climb an inaccessible mountain or explore the depths of the ocean? What would they hope to discover on their trip? What equipment would they need to take? How would they travel?

Extension activity: your pupils need to raise the necessary funding to ensure that their expedition can take place. In small groups, challenge them to produce a presentation to ‘sell’ their expedition to potential investors; they could use a computer package such as PowerPoint to create a professional looking ‘pitch’ to the investors. Encourage your more able pupils to cost out their expedition; how much funding would be required to make the expedition a success?

*Why not try...* getting each of your groups to make their presentation to another class or an invited audience of parents? You could even allow the audience to be the investors and vote for which expedition they would be most likely to fund.

**Pupils’ pack contents**

- ‘About Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition’ activity sheets (4)
- Crew member job application form
- ‘My *Endurance* diary’ activity sheet
- *Endurance* photograph activity sheet
- ‘A song on the ice’ activity sheet
- ‘My polar exploration clothing’ activity sheet
- Blank sheet with the border top and bottom for your pupils’ own artwork and writing

**Maths sheet answers:**

**About Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition (3)**

1) 14
2) 32

**About Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition (4)**

1) 4 months 4) 22 or 11
2) 7 days 28 14
3) 22 5) 758 days
About Shackleton’s Endurance expedition

Read each of the facts about Shackleton’s Endurance expedition and then answer the questions. Try to write your answers in full sentences in your own words. Don’t forget your punctuation!

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** Ernest Shackleton and his crew on the *Endurance* were aiming to complete the first overland crossing of the icy and inhospitable continent of Antarctica via the South Pole. Their planned route would have taken them from a landing point on the coast of Antarctica in the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea.

1) What was the aim of Shackleton’s expedition?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** After sailing south for four months, *Endurance* entered the Weddell Sea in December 1914. The crew could not force their way through to make landfall because of the pack ice. The ship and men were stuck fast. In November 1915, after being destroyed by the pressure of the ice, *Endurance* sunk and the crew were marooned. The crew tried to drag the ship’s lifeboats to the nearest land 650km away, but it was impossible. Shackleton decided that the only option was to set up camp on the ice and drift with it – hopefully towards land.

2) Why did Shackleton and his expedition crew set up camp on the ice?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** When marooned on the ice, the crew tried to pass the time by playing football, racing the dogs, playing card games, singing songs, writing diaries, hunting seals and penguins for food and trying to keep warm by burning the blubber (fat) from the seals on the stove.

3) What do you think would have been the worst thing about being marooned, and why?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
About Shackleton’s Endurance expedition (2)

Read each of the facts about Shackleton’s Endurance expedition and then answer the questions. Try to write your answers in full sentences in your own words. Don’t forget your punctuation!

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** In April 1916, the ice finally broke up and the crew were able to launch the three lifeboats that were saved from Endurance. They headed north, to Elephant Island; 15 months after first becoming stuck in the ice, the crew was finally on land again! But they were far from safe. The nearest manned whaling station was still around 1,500km (800 nautical miles) away at Stromness on an island called South Georgia.

1) For how long were the expedition party stuck on the ice?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** Shackleton picked five men to join him on the perilous crossing of the Southern Ocean in the open lifeboat James Caird: Frank Worsley, the Captain of Endurance who was an expert navigator; experienced polar explorer and seaman Tom Crean, who was the Second Officer; able sailors Timothy McCarthy and John Vincent; and the ship’s carpenter, Harry “Chippy” McNish. The six men covered around 1,500km in the open lifeboat through some of the world’s roughest seas during the Antarctic winter to land on the southern uninhabited shore of South Georgia.

2) Why was Frank Worsley so important to the crew of James Caird?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** After resting for just over a week, Shackleton, Crean, and Worsley set off on foot to cross the icy and mountainous island of South Georgia. They left McCarthy, Vincent and McNish to shelter on the beach because they were too exhausted to move. It was a journey of 48km (30 miles). It was the first time that anyone had ever crossed the island on foot, and the only equipment that the three men had was a carpenter’s tool called an adze (a bit like an axe) and a length of rope. The men used screws through the boots to make them grip on the icy ground. Shackleton, Crean, and Worsley arrived at the whaling station at Stromness around 36 hours after setting off from the beach. They were exhausted and filthy, but safe at last.

3) What equipment did Shackleton, Crean, and Worsley have to help them cross South Georgia?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
About Shackleton’s Endurance expedition (3)

Read the fact about the crew of Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition and then answer the questions.

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

**Fact:** The crew of *Endurance* consisted of 28 men, 60 husky dogs, two pigs (to provide meat) and the ship’s cat, Mrs Chippy. Half of the men were English. Of the remaining crew, five were Irish, two were from New Zealand, three were Scottish, and there were one each from America, Wales, Australia and India.

1) How many of *Endurance*’s crew were English? __________________________________

2) How many more dogs than men were there? __________________________________

3) Complete the bar chart below showing the number of men from each different country amongst the crew:

![Bar chart](chart.png)
Read the series of dates and facts about what happened when during Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition and then answer the questions.

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

Facts:

8 August 1914: *Endurance* sets sail from Plymouth
8 December 1914: The expedition reaches the Weddell Sea in Antarctica
18 January 1915: *Endurance* becomes stuck in the pack ice.
27 October 1915: The crew sets up Patience Camp on the ice
21 November 1915: *Endurance* sinks
9 April 1916: The ship’s lifeboats are launched
15 April 1916: The crew lands on Elephant Island
24 April 1916: Shackleton’s small group of six sets sail for South Georgia
10 May 1916: The *James Caird* lifeboat lands on South Georgia
19–20 May 1916: Shackleton, Worsley and Crean trek across South Georgia
30 August 1916: Shackleton arrives back on Elephant Island on board a boat
3 September 1916: The entire party reached Punta Arenas in Chile and the end of

1) In months, how long did it take for *Endurance* to sail from Plymouth to the Weddell Sea? _______________________________________________________________________

2) How long in days was the journey on the lifeboats from the pack ice to Elephant Island? Include both the day the boats were launched and the day they landed in your answer: _______________________________________________________________________

3) There were 28 men in the crew. Six sailed from Elephant Island to South Georgia on *James Caird*. How many men stayed on Elephant Island? _______________________________________________________________________

4) Express your answer to question 3 as a fraction: _______________________________________________________________________

5) How many days in total were there in the expedition from their departure from Southampton to eventual arrival at Punta Arenas in Chile? Note: 1916 was a leap year! _______________________________________________________________________

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Endurance crew member
Job Application Form

Name: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Age: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Current job: ___________________________________________________________________________________

Use this box to tell us about your skills and experience – why would you make a good member of Shackleton’s crew?

Personal statement – why do you want to join Shackleton’s crew?
Many of the men on the Endurance expedition wrote diaries during their two-year long ordeal. For many this was a way of passing the time. Imagine that you are a member of Shackleton’s crew. Write a diary extract from the point of view of your character. You might choose to write about the boredom when marooned on the ice, or how you felt when left behind on Elephant Island. Or perhaps you are part of Shackleton’s small team that set out for South Georgia on the lifeboat, James Caird...

Name: _____________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________

My Endurance diary
This photograph of *Endurance* was taken by Australian photographer Frank Hurley who was part of the expedition crew. It was taken in 1915 when the ship was stuck in the pack ice.

Can you think of some good adjectives to describe the scene?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

*Endurance* photo
A song on the ice

The ship’s banjo was saved from the wreck of *Endurance*. Can you compose a song to sing on the ice? Use this sheet for your lyrics.

Name: ____________________________________________
My polar expedition clothing

The crew members’ clothing consisted of long underwear and thick socks with a pullover and trousers on top, a windbreaker jacket, woollen hat, gloves and heavy boots. Can you design an outfit for a modern polar expedition?

Name: ________________________________
This play is a type of melodrama acted out by a small group of actors and/or puppets. It requires plenty of over-acting, energy and daft sound effects made by the actors (who also wear different hats and use bizarre props to represent things/animals/weather in the story).

Parts:
- Ernest Shackleton: the polar explorer (and narrator)
- Nellie: an American journalist (another narrator)
- Emily: Ernest’s wife (sound effects)
- John Rowlett: an old school friend
- Tom: a very lively actor
- A talking penguin: an observer of events

It is 1919. Ernest Shackleton has just published a book about his polar Endurance expedition and he is planning his next journey (The Quest Expedition) to the Antarctic. To raise money, he goes on a lecture tour, taking friends to help dramatise his story.

Nellie: Hello everyone. I’m Nellie Bly, a journalist from the United States and I came here to England to interview the famous explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton. But he’s a guy who just can’t sit still so before I knew it, I was roped in to joining him on his lecture tour.

Emily: And Ernest certainly knows a lot about ropes. Isn’t that so, darling?

Ernest: Knot a lot! *(He ties a knot dramatically for all to see)*

Emily: Ernest is my husband and I am pleased to say that knots have saved his life many times – as you’re about to find out.
Ernest: Particularly when I ‘tied the knot’ when marrying you, Emily dear.

Nellie: But let’s get back to Sir Ernest’s last ripping adventure to the South Pole. It was his famous expedition in the ship Endurance – at the start of the Great War in 1914. Five years ago.

Ernest: My book about my nail-biting expedition is called ‘SOUTH’.

Emily: Available at all good book stores.

Nellie: Prices may vary. Subject to availability. Terms and conditions apply.

Ernest: But now, we bring you the world premiere of ‘SOUTH: the stage play’. As soon as my wife learns the piano, it will be ‘SOUTH: the musical’.

Emily: *(Singing operatically an arpeggio)* S-O-U-T-H pole.

Ernest: I shall tell my story in my own words – to be acted by my friends. We will attempt to tell a two-year story in two minutes. Brace yourselves... *(Tom leaps on, stares manically and holds himself rigid)* What are you doing?

Tom: Bracing myself *(exits, walking weirdly)*

Ernest: This is a story to chill you to the bone.

Emily: Brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr
Emily: (shivering) Brrrrrrrrrr

Ernest: To turn your heart to ice, to turn your knees to jelly, to make your blood run cold...

Tom: Brrrrrr (running on wildly, overacting being freezing, teeth chattering, knees wobbling etc) Quick – I need a hot water bottle... (exits)

Ernest: My Ripping Adventure began as a plan back in 1913. I advertised for willing companions in The Times newspaper.

John: (Very upper class, reading ‘Times’) Men wanted for hazardous journey.

Tom: (Running on enthusiastically) Count me in.

John: Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger...

Tom: Hold on a minute...

John: Safe return doubtful.

Tom: Get lost! (exits)

John: More than likely you will! But think of the honour and recognition in case of success.

Tom: (Blows a loud raspberry from the wings)

Ernest: I had run Ripping Adventures to the South Pole before, but this was to be the first overland crossing of the continent of
Antarctica. That’s over two thousand miles of frozen deserted wilderness.

Penguin: It’s not deserted – I live there... sometimes. You’re right about the frozen bit. It’s perishing. See you in a bit *(waddles off)*

Ernest: By the following summer, just after the outbreak of war...

Emily: Bang... boom... hack-ack-ack

Ernest: I had gathered together a crew of twenty eight men on a three-masted sailing ship named Endurance with engines ... with engines...

Emily: Oh er put-put-put-put-put.

Ernest: Designed to ram her way through polar sea ice... *(Pauses for sound effect)* Ram *(to Emily)* I said ‘RAM’.

Emily: Baaah

Tom: *(Running on pretending to be a ship smashing into ice)* Ram, ram, ram

Nellie: Also on board were sledges and sixty husky dogs to pull them.

Emily: Woof, woof, woof *(Long croaking noise)* Sorry, I’m just a little husky!

Nellie: As well as Mrs Chippy

Emily: Meow, meow
Nellie: The ship’s cat.

Penguin: I’m not happy about that. I don’t like cats.

John: Tough. Get back to your ice floe.

Penguin: *(Sulking)* No one ever cares about penguins. It’s not fair. *(Waddles off)*

Tom: Just go with the floe! *(Becoming a sailor who sounds more like a pirate)* Ar rah, captain, we’ve arrived at the island of South Georgia. It looks like a whaling station, sir.

Ernest: How can you tell?

Tom: Because it’s a station and they’re weighing a whale. I suppose it’s a whale-weigh station.

Emily: Choo choo – oh, sorry.

John: Watch out for icebergs, captain. It’s jolly cold here with lots of sea ice.

Penguin: Well I did warn you.

Nellie: Endurance entered the Weddell Sea but huge chunks of floating pack-ice crashed against the ship.

Tom: *(Barging on as the ship crashing through ice)* Crash, smash, crunch. Ram, ram, ram. Kersplosh, kersplash, clunk, kerchunk...

Ernest: The icebergs loomed above us on every side...
Tom: (Big arm movements) Loom loom loom

Penguin: I know a joke about icebergs.

John: Not now. This is serious. Icebergs can sink ships, you know. Have you never heard of the Titanic a few years ago?

Penguin: Of course not. I’m a penguin.

Nellie: Suddenly there was a grinding, a groaning, a shuddering and a shaking.

Emily: Grind... groan... shudder... shake

Tom: (OTT) Oh no, oh no, oh no! Captain, oh captain, our ship is firmly wedged in a great slab of ice. We’re stuck – do you hear me? Stuck! Oh no.

Penguin: Well you’ve got no choice then, have you? You’ll have to hear my joke now.

John: I told you, this is very serious. We’re surrounded by ice.

Penguin: You ought to try being a penguin, mate. Anyway, what’s the difference between an iceberg and a clothes brush?

All: Not now.

Ernest: This was a serious crisis. There was nothing for it but to sit tight while our stricken ship that was locked firmly in the ice drifted northwest.

Tom: (Hysterical) Northwest? Northwest? That’s the wrong direction.
We’re moving away from land. We’re doomed!

Nellie: I’ve got a niggling question.

Ernest: What is it?

Nellie: What IS the difference between a clothes brush and an iceberg?

Penguin: Simple. One brushes coats – the other crushes boats. If you’d asked me before, I’d have told you this would happen. Look, your ship is cracking up.

Tom: (Running across the stage screaming) It’s not the only one! We’re doomed.

Emily: The ship crammed with supplies was cracking and letting in water. The crew had to unload what they could – fast. Then they hunted for fresh food.

Nellie: Like penguins.

Penguin: I’m off... (Exits)

Ernest: With a heavy heart I gave the order to abandon ship, as the ice cracked her hull like a nut, she splintered into matchwood and sunk into the icy depths.

Emily: Creeeexxxaak, craaaaaack, splosh, glug glug glug

Ernest: After ten months stranded on the ice, our ship had finally gone and we were marooned. Having saved the ships’ lifeboats, our only hope was to drag them miles across the ice to the sea beyond.
(Horrified) That’s impossible, captain. They’re terribly heavy and I’m chilly.

Wrap up.

Well, I was only saying...

No, wrap up as warm as you can. As many layers as you’ve got. This is going to be colder than the coldest thing you’ve ever known. Then a bit colder than that – with icicles on top. But fear not, I will look after you.

(Singing) Freezer jolly good fellow, freezer jolly good fellow...

Camping on the ice was dangerous. The food began running out...

(Penguin runs across the stage) What was that?

I was the food – running out.

The only answer was to hunt seals. Their blubber made useful fuel, too. Drinking water was a problem. Melted sea ice is too salty...

Er excuse me... this might help. Have you thought of fruit juice? Do you know the difference between a walrus and an orange?

I’m a walrus. Go on, then, do tell us the difference between a walrus and an orange.

Put your arms round it and squeeze as hard as you can. If you don’t get orange juice, it’s a walrus. (Tom looks disgusted and wriggles off)
John: It’s time to eat a penguin...

Penguin: I’m off... *(Exits)*

Ernest: At long last the ice started to break up and we could launch the lifeboats. Sailing them through the icy sea was treacherous. Some of the men got frostbite.

Tom: Ouch! *(all stare at him)* It was the frost. It bit me. *(Exits)*

Nellie: After a week at sea, everyone cheered to see Elephant Island ahead.

Emily: Hooray!

Tom: Ooh look, I can just see its trunk.

Ernest: It had been 497 days since we last set foot on land. Some of my men wept with joy or giggled hysterically.

Tom: *(Falls to the ground mixing sobs and laughs)* Boo hoo, he he he, boo hoo...

Ernest: We upturned our lifeboats, lashed them together and sheltered under them from the howling storms.

Emily: Hooooooowwwwwwwl.

Ernest: We were still in great danger from freezing to death...

Penguin: *(Waddling on)* Excuse me...

Ernest: Or from starving. *(John raises rifle to shoot penguin)*
I’m off... *(Exits)*

Ernest: With no rescue likely, I decided to sail one of the lifeboats taking a few of my sailors with me. I hoped to make it back to South Georgia to raise the alarm.

*(Sound of a siren)* Nee-nah nee-nah nee-nah

John: While the rest of the crew crammed under the lifeboats in the constant darkness, our intrepid hero braved the stormy seas...

Emily: Woooosh crashshshshshshs rumble splaaashshshshshshsh hooooowl

Tom: Oh no.... an enormous wave bears down on the tiny boat

Emily: Ggrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr (long pause) Ggrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Tom: What’s that?

Emily: A bear.

Tom: But why the enormous pause?

Emily: Because that’s what they have. Everyone knows polar bears have enormous paws.

Nellie: Spoiler alert: Polar bears live at the NORTH pole – not down here.

Ernest: Eventually, after a long and hellish journey, we arrived on South Georgia.

Emily: Phew!
Ernest: But we were on the wrong side of the island.

Emily: Doh!

Nellie: The whaling station was a hundred and fifty miles away over treacherous mountains.

Tom: Don’t you just hate it when that happens?

Penguin: *(Waddling on)* Maybe I can help.

John: Where’s my rifle?

Penguin: I’m off... *(Exits)*

Ernest: It was tough going. Eventually, after miles of trudging through snow, we came to the top of a steep snow slope – but night was falling fast.

Emily: Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah

Ernest: Whatever was that?

Emily: Night. It just fell.

Ernest: There was only one thing for it. I grabbed my long rope *(does so)*.

Nellie: He grabbed his long rope... and he coiled it up tight and tied a few knots to make a sort of... *(tah-dah)* toboggan to whizz down the slope.

Tom: *(Whizzing across the stage)* Wheeeeeeeeee...
Ernest: We camped at the foot of the mountains until dawn broke.

Emily: Smash... bang... wallop

Tom: Eeek – what was that?

Emily: Dawn breaking.

Ernest: At long last we staggered to the whale station where we could eat and sleep like never before. No longer were we desperate for food.

Penguin: Yippee!

Nellie: The whalers set off to rescue the rest of the party still stranded on Elephant Island.

Emily: (Trumpeting noise – all stare) That’s meant to be an elephant, by the way!

John: We were mightily relieved to be rescued. The expedition had been a disaster from start to finish but, incredibly, everyone had survived.

Penguin: Including me! (John shoots the penguin)

Ernest: All right, so things didn’t go well that time. But hey, I’m not one to be defeated that easily. I’m going to go back for another stab at Antarctica.

All: Oh no!

Tom: Count me out!
Ernest: I just need to raise a bit of cash to pay for it all. Any offers?

John: Well, seeing as I’m your old chum and I’m very rich - I’ll put up a lot of the money for your next trip, Ernest. Mind you, this audience looks pretty rich, too – so pass round the hat and lock all the doors so they can’t escape.

Nellie: We hope you’ve enjoyed this world premiere of ‘SOUTH: The Stage Play in two minutes’ even though we’ve gone on longer than we planned – with a lot going wrong (a bit like Sir Ernest’s other expeditions to dangerous places!) Which all goes to show YOU WOULDN’T WANT TO BE ON SHACKLETON’S POLAR EXPEDITION... EVER!

NB: Ernest Shackleton died from a heart attack in 1922 while on the next expedition, and he was buried on the remote Atlantic island of South Georgia.