

## A Taste for Adventure

Though his father encouraged him to go to medical school, Ernest Shackleton always had a taste for adventure. He joined the merchant navy at the age of 16, and quickly advanced in his career. He loved the travel, and once joined British naval officer and explorer Robert Falcon Scott on an expedition to the South Pole. Shackleton got sick on this trip and had to return home, but the South Pole had captured his imagination. Along with Scott and a fellow traveler, he had been closer to the South Pole than any human ever had before. Could he make it all the way?

He made a second attempt in 1907, but fell short by 97 miles before harsh weather conditions made continuing on impossible. Shackleton dreamed of becoming the first human to set foot on the South Pole, but in 1911, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen beat him to it. So Shackleton set himself a new goal—to cross Antarctica via the South Pole.

He set out in August of 1914 on a ship called the *Endurance*. Within a few months he and his crew reached South Georgia, an island in the Southern Atlantic. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December they left the island. It was the last time they would touch land for 497 days. In January 1915 with their ship trapped in ice, they abandoned ship and set up camp on the floating ice. The ship sank a few months later, and in April 1916 Shackleton and his men crowded into three small boats and headed for Elephant Island, off the southernmost tip of South America. It took them seven brutal days to reach the island, from which it was unlikely that they would be rescued, since the island was far removed from shipping lanes. So Shackleton and five others set out in a lifeboat towards South Georgia. It took them sixteen days to get there, where they made contact with a whaling station and made arrangements to return for the men he had left behind. His men were rescued on August 25, 1916. All 28 men survived the almost two years of being stranded.

Three years later, Shackleton published the story of their amazing journey in a book called *South*. Though you might think otherwise, Shackleton had not yet had his fill of adventure, and towards the end of 1921 he sets off for the South Pole again, in hopes of circumnavigating the Antarctic. He never made it there – on January 5<sup>th</sup>, in 1922, Shackleton had a heart attack on his ship and died. He was buried in South Georgia. Though Shackleton was not much revered in his time, in the decades that followed he has become more and more respected and is today considered a leading figure of the period known as the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.



1. What is the central idea of the story?

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2. How is the central idea developed as the story progresses?

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