

Scott of the Antarctic

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This eLesson is about a British explorer, Robert Scott (1868–1912), famous for reaching the South Pole in second place, and then tragically dying with his men on their return. Although students may not have heard of Scott, his dramatic adventure is likely to capture their imaginations. This year is also the centenary of the expedition, so events are being held to celebrate it in the UK.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Ask students to show you where the Antarctic is on a map or globe, and to tell you what they know about the place. Try to elicit any ideas in terms of the terrain, the weather, plant/animal life, etc. If you have the facilities, then show some visuals of the Antarctic to prepare them for the initial brainstorm in exercise 1. You may need to clarify the words *polar* and *expedition*. Take feedback on points of interest.
- 2 Write the name *Robert Scott* on the board, and ask if anyone has heard of him. Explain briefly who he is and when he lived. Students then complete the gist reading in exercise 2.
- 3 Tell students to read the text again, this time more carefully (exercise 3). Refer them to the Glossary. Students read then compare answers. In feedback, invite them to give their reactions to the text.
- 4 Students answer the questions in exercise 4, which are more thought-provoking. They should work in pairs to discuss these. For question 3, you could tell students that one major criticism lies in Scott's reliance on ponies and on the first motorised sledges of the period, while Amundsen relied on dogs. Note that the answer to question 4 is a personal response.
- 5 Students may prefer to complete the speaking exercise (exercise 6) first, having just completed the three comprehension tasks. Exercise 5 is a revision exercise of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives. If the students are not familiar with this language, it could serve as an introduction.
- 6 For exercise 6, if possible first contrast a few sample photos from Scott's expedition with modern day expeditions/explorers, to highlight developments in all areas. Take feedback as a whole class and assist students by inputting any necessary language as they need it, putting this on the board to serve as a record.
- 7 To end the lesson, set one of these two tasks as extension work in class or homework. EITHER ask students to consider the questions Scott would have asked people applying to be team members, and to then write these up in interview format (Scott and the interviewee). OR, ask students to compose a letter from Scott's wife Kathleen to her husband in the last few weeks, if this is not deemed too sensitive an issue (remember at this point Kathleen would not have known exactly what was happening).

Answer key

- 1 Students' own answers. (See Related websites for a list of items to take on a modern expedition.)

Reading eLesson

- 2 Check briefly that students have some ideas about what happened to the explorer, e.g. where he went, how their expedition ended, etc.
- 3 There may be slight variation in wording.
 - 1 (about) 100 years
 - 2 South
 - 3 Norway
 - 4 a month
 - 5 (desperately) disappointed
 - 6 -55°C
 - 7 tent
 - 8 sledge (full of specimens)
 - 9 brave
 - 10 wife
 - 11 science and nature
- 4
 - 1 They had dragged the heavy sledge until the very end, despite everything – being hungry, cold, exhausted and generally weak.
 - 2 No, they don't. Scott has been criticised for not putting together a more experienced team and needing to be better prepared.
 - 3 It shows great strength of character; he was strong even in the face of death. He wants her to know that he feels very positively, even at this point; he has no regrets as he was not born to be a man of leisure. In this way he also hopes to give his family comfort and strength.
 - 4 We don't really know the answer to this. It may be that the great disappointment did not help their demise. If they had reached the Pole first, they may at least have died more happily. It is known that the weather conditions on the journey back were unusually harsh.
- 5

1 excited	3 disappointed	5 interested
2 tiring	4 frightening	6 interesting
- 6 Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

<http://polarexplorers.com/expeditions/southpole-ski.shtml#more> (equipment for an expedition)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/7901733.stm (photos of the expedition)

<http://www.south-pole.com/p0000090.htm> (details of the expedition)

<http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Robert%20Falcon%20Scott2.htm> (details and some photos)

<http://www.scott100.org/> (events to celebrate the centenary of Scott's expedition)

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/news/dp/2007010902> (last letters home)

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/histtexts/scottdiary/>

<http://www.bl.uk/turningthepages#> (scanned pages of Scott's original diary)

<http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/resources/expeditions/> (other Antarctic expeditions)