

Race to the South Pole

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Adapted by LHU Language Center

Characters

Narrator, Roald (roo-all) Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott

Scene 1

Narrator:

Antarctica was the last unexplored land mass on earth. Robert Falcon Scott led a British expedition headed for the Pole in 1910. Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen sent Scott a telegram. It said, Beg leave to inform you, *Fram* proceeding Antarctic. The *Fram* was his ship. It was a direct challenge, and the race was on. Explorers kept detailed journals of their experiences. If we could take the journals of Scott and Amundsen and turn them into moment by moment messages home, it might look something like this. This is Scott on the left and Amundsen on the right. It's January 1911.

Scott:

Landing begins at McMurdo Sound.

Amundsen:

Reached the Ross Ice Shelf.

Amundsen:

Home was green pine woods and splashing water. Here, nothing but ice.

Scott:

Sea ice receding from the barrier. We crossed with only hours to spare. Said goodbye to the *Terra Nova*.

Narrator:

In February both teams began trips to set up supply depots along the route they would take to the Pole. Scott had brought along three motorized tractors to pull sledges. He had a few teams of dogs, but he didn't put much faith in them.

Amundsen planned to use dogs. He and his men would follow them on skis.

Narrator:

It's February 1911.

Amundsen:

Scott's ship, the *Terra Nova*, came in at midnight.

Scott:

Every day some new obstacle comes to light. This is what makes the game so well worth playing.

Amundsen:

Fram departed. We won't see the crew again until they return for us next year.

Narrator:

March 1911.

Amundsen:

Depots complete. Dogs exhausted.

Scott:

Cannot rid myself of the fear that misfortune is in the air.

Narrator:

April to July 1911. The Arctic winter when the sun went down and didn't come back up until spring.

Amundsen:

Sixty tons of seals killed. Fresh meat for nine men and 115 dogs for half a year.

Scott:

Finally arrived at the winter station. Three a week to pass the long, dark winter.

Narrator:

August 1911.

Amundsen:

Sun appeared for the first time in four months.

Scott:

Sun returned. We felt very young and sang and cheered.

Narrator:

September 1911.

Amundsen:

Had to shoot three puppies. It was a mercy. They would have frozen to death.

Scott:

Some of the ponies appear to be going mad and a dog died of a mysterious disease.

Amundsen:

Seals up to the ice and Arctic terns overhead. A sure sign of spring.

Narrator:

November 1911.

Amundsen:

Reached our last supply depot. Stayed for a day to give the dogs a last rest.

Scott:

The future is in the lap of the gods. I can think of nothing left undone.

Amundsen:

Approaching the mountains.

Scott:

Weather horrid. Spirits low.

Scott:

We haven't seen Amundsen yet.

Amundsen:

Reached the top. As agreed, some of the dogs were shot for food. We called the place Butcher's Shop.

Scott:

Three ponies had to be shot. Supplied meat for men and dogs.

Narrator:

December 1911.

Amundsen:

Cheers and shouts! We passed the point of Shackleton's expedition. We're farther south than any human being has ever gone.

Amundsen:

Every step takes us closer to the Pole. Will we be first?

Scott:

Shot the remaining ponies. Had to pull the sledges ourselves.

Amundsen:

We should reach the Pole tomorrow. I feel like a little boy on the night before Christmas.

Scott:

Pulling 800 pounds on a sledge.

Amundsen:

The men shouted HALT. The meter said we were at the Pole. I wanted to go to the North Pole and here I am standing on the South Pole. Can anything more topsy-turvy be imagined?

Scott:

Today it took nine hours to travel half a mile.

Amundsen:

Left a letter to the King of Norway and one to Captain Scott. Wrote out names on the tent pole. Said goodbye to the Pole and headed North.

Narrator:

January 1912.

Scott:

Reached the Polar Plateau. For the first time our goal seems really in sight.

Amundsen:

Safely through the field of crevasses and back on the glacier.

Scott:

Beyond the record of Shackleton's walk. Only eighty-five miles from the Pole, but it's going to be a stiff pull.

Amundsen:

Missed the depot. Too tired to go back.

Scott:

Bowers spotted a black speck on the horizon. A flag. Sledge marks and dog tracks told the whole story. I am very sorry for my loyal companions.

Amundsen:

Snow. Is there no end of it?

Scott:

We have turned our backs on the Pole with sore feelings. We face 800 miles of solid dragging. This is an awful place.

Amundsen:

The *Terra Nova* arrived. Aboard ship we say goodbye to our home of the past year.

Narrator:

February 1912.

Scott:

Our food supply is shrinking. We are not going strong.

Amundsen:

What we have done will be of little value unless we get the message to the world.

Scott:

A very terrible day. Evans died.

Amundsen:

Captain Nilsen found a way through the ice-packed sea.

Scott:

We are in for a rotten critical time going home. It's still 400 miles to the hut.

Amundsen:

We make slow progress northward.

Narrator:

March 1912

Scott:

We all have frostbite in our feet. The others are still confident of getting through, or they pretend to be, but I don't know.

Amundsen:

We have docked at Hobart Town.

Scott:

We are pretty well done in. When the provisions come to an end, we will stop. Tragedy all along the line.

Amundsen:

Took my cablegrams and went ashore.

Scott:

Had we lived, I would have a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions that would have stirred the heart of every Englishman.

Narrator:

News of Amundsen's success flashed across the world. His achievement was celebrated as a great triumph. In November, a search party found the tent with the bodies of Scott and his two companions. They were only eleven miles from the supply depot. The race was done. The last land mass on Earth had been conquered.