

Reading

Thematic Overview

'Shackleton's Journey' – William Grill

Shackleton's Journey by William Grill is a beautifully illustrated tale of Ernest Shackleton's courageous expedition to Antarctica. It highlights the bravery, teamwork, and determination required to survive in such a harsh environment.

English

The theme of endurance and exploration in Shackleton's Journey allows pupils to engage deeply with the English curriculum by writing letters from the perspective of crew members, drawing on emotive language and descriptive detail to communicate experiences of hardship and hope. It also supports structured debate by encouraging pupils to consider moral and logistical dilemmas faced by Shackleton's team, developing skills in persuasive speaking and listening.

Technology

The harsh conditions faced by the expedition team prompt pupils to design and make stuffed toys based on the animals encountered or imagined mascots of the crew, incorporating sewing and textiles skills. Additionally, the theme supports learning about plant growth and design through hanging baskets, drawing parallels with the importance of food sources, greenery, and morale on long expeditions.

Geography

The book follows Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, highlighting resilience, teamwork, and survival. It links past exploration to modern Antarctic life, science, and wildlife conservation. Parallels are drawn with Middle Eastern journeys, showing shared themes of adventure, cultural exchange, and scientific progress. It also prompts reflection on environmental challenges in both regions and the need for innovative solutions.

Science

The context of Antarctic survival enables pupils to explore the science of human and animal reproduction by comparing life cycles and adaptation in extreme environments. The story's vivid depictions of fire, cooking, and fuel use during the expedition also provide a foundation for investigating reversible and irreversible changes, such as melting ice versus burning fuel.

Art

The narrative inspires an interactive art installation where pupils can recreate key moments or scenes from Shackleton's journey using mixed media. This immersive approach supports artistic exploration of scale, texture, and storytelling, allowing pupils to respond creatively to the emotional and physical challenges depicted in the book.

History

While the book mainly recounts Shackleton's adventures in Antarctica, it also evokes the spirit of ancient Babylon, as both represent early efforts in exploration and the development of advanced societies. Both faced extreme conditions—Shackleton with the cold of Antarctica and the Babylonians with the heat of the desert—and devised ways to survive.

Shackleton's journey connects with Captain Cook's expeditions through themes of discovery and leadership. By examining Cook's travels in the Pacific alongside Shackleton's Antarctic mission, readers can gain a better understanding of the diverse challenges explorers faced and how these experiences shaped history.

