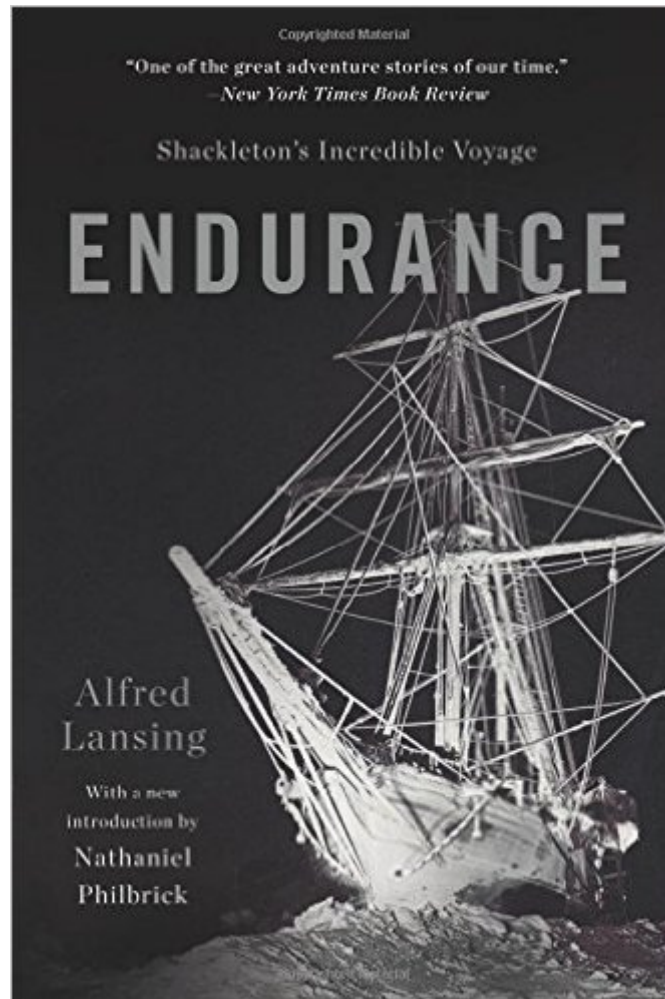


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# Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage



## Synopsis

In August 1914, polar explorer Ernest Shackleton boarded the *Endurance* and set sail for Antarctica, where he planned to cross the last uncharted continent on foot. In January 1915, after battling its way through a thousand miles of pack ice and only a day's sail short of its destination, the *Endurance* became locked in an island of ice. Thus began the legendary ordeal of Shackleton and his crew of twenty-seven men. For ten months the ice-moored *Endurance* drifted northwest before it was finally crushed between two ice floes. With no options left, Shackleton and a skeleton crew attempted a near-impossible journey over 850 miles of the South Atlantic's heaviest seas to the closest outpost of civilization. Their survival, and the survival of the men they left behind, depended on their small lifeboat successfully finding the island of South Georgia—a tiny dot of land in a vast and hostile ocean. In *Endurance*, the definitive account of Ernest Shackleton's fateful trip, Alfred Lansing brilliantly narrates the harrowing and miraculous voyage that has defined heroism for the modern age.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an absolutely amazing and true accounting of the 1914 Antarctic expedition gone to hell. It is clear that the author did an incredible amount of research, and though this book doesn't read like a novel, its presentation is much more powerful this way, giving a panoramic view of the whole terrible and desperate situation of these men. I don't have any experience even comparable to what these men went through, the closest I've ever come is rowing down the coast of Maine in the summer in a 30 foot pulling boat, and I'll tell you, this guy gets every detail. Anyway, an absolutely incredible look

at human endurance, at what a person will go through if he must. I definitely recommend this book to everyone. One note...make sure the version you buy or get at the library has expedition photographer Hurley's photographs in it. Some paperback editions don't, and you're really missing part of the experience without them.

Within the genre of real life adventure books, *Endurance* is definitely a stand out. I am lucky to have a brother who regularly reads about explorers and wilderness adventures and recommends to me only the best of the best. Other must-reads in the genre are *The Long Walk* (though that turns out to be most likely fiction so I no longer recommend it), *Into the Wild*, and *Arctic Adventure: My Life in the Frozen North*. *Endurance* tells the true story of Ernest Shackleton and his crew's ill-fated and legendary expedition to Antarctica. It was likely one of history's best outcomes for what was essentially a disaster. At the time of launching, Shackleton's expedition was history's most extensively planned exploratory trip to Antarctica, complete with a photographer, scientists, carpenters and engineers (a crew of 27 in total). Shackleton's goal was to transverse and study Antarctica. When they set off in 1914, this expedition was the pride of the United Kingdom. Shackleton was the toast of the town for his bravery and expertise. For his bravery he is still toasted, but his polar expertise proved to be lacking. The ship he guided was no match for the South Pole's crushing cold and ice. Soon after arriving, the *Endurance* was stuck in ice, absolutely unable to move. The crew salvaged what it could and was forced to make do with dwindling supplies and provisions, eventually eating some of their beloved dogs. I won't dampen your reading pleasure by giving away too much of the unfolding events, but through a combination of amazing resourcefulness, outstanding leadership, and ultimately incredible luck on the part of Shackleton, the whole crew survived without a single life lost. Naturally, there was an abundance of suffering along the way, but also an impressive amount of team spirit and toughness. The book is inspirational and a quiet page turner. Please note, the "quiet page turner" part. *Endurance* is definitely an engrossing read, and once you get into it, you won't want to put it down. I found the book starts a bit on the slow side, at least for all its fanfare, but don't give up if you aren't immediately bowled over. You'll be justly rewarded if you stick with it.

This book is one of the few exceptional -absolutely exceptional- tales of survival and it proves the maxim that nothing is so bad that it can't get worse. But also it proves that you can know the end of a story - it is a well known fact that Shackleton brought all his men through this arduous trial and all survived - and it doesn't spoil the story at all. Truth is not only stranger than fiction, but it is a good deal harder. The bare-bones of the story are that Shackleton and his team left civilisation in 1914 in

the Endurance to travel to attempt to reach the South Pole - a trip he had tried and failed by only a couple of hundred miles or so to achieve in 1908. Amundsen had already reached the pole first but for Shackleton it was unfinished business. The Endurance had been built to push through the pack ice, but conditions proved too much and it was trapped in pack ice. Summer wore on and there was no escape - the winds were in the wrong direction - then winter hit and they were trapped in their boat. They settled in to a routine until the ice went against them and cracked the Endurance. Shackleton realised the only way out was on their own, so they abandoned the boat and made for the pack ice at first dragging the boats, then relying a floe to carry them north where they might find more supplies, or be rescued. In the end they had to rescue themselves and this is the story of their indomitable courage and strength to survive under incredibly harsh conditions and in grave discomfort. We are talking about camping out in Antarctica - in less than adequate shelter, with essentially starvation rations, no heating, barely adequate clothing. Lansing tells this story in a sparing style and it really works. He has had access to (I think) all the diaries available from men who kept them on the trip and they are very revealing of both personalities and foibles of the various characters who made up the trip - and these aren't all a bunch of saintly characters pulling together for the sake of their team and mutual survival - they fight, some are occasionally selfish, they love their dogs but have almost no compunction of putting them down when they have to - and they are very real and human. Lansing also brings to light some of the things you wouldn't think about it - the incredible boredom that they all felt, that they were generally alternately wracked by either gripping hunger or desperate need for survival and how to escape - the one emotion replacing the other depending on conditions. He also explains some of the things you wouldn't even think to ask - how they went to the toilet for instance, the conditions inside the huts and the tents and so on. It brings a very vivid picture of life as it must have been for the group. And really, nothing isn't so bad that it can't get worse. Each time you think that Shackleton is about to win there is a small disaster, or the elements go against them - they are constantly battling for their lives with decreasing odds of their survival. Even once they make it off the floe and onto land they have to move again to a safer landing place - and then they must work out how to get help. The nearest land is Chile some 500 miles away but it is almost impossible to get to because of wind and current, so they must try to South Georgia, over 800 miles away and a tiny speck of an island 25 miles across and they only thing in their way between Antarctica and South Africa. Hardly an easy thing find in an open 22 foot boat. I know recently they tried to re-enact the voyage of Shackleton in his tiny boat - the James Caird - but without success as storms forced them to abandon the attempt. And that was a luxury trip compared to Shackleton's - the conditions on board were appalling - with stones for ballast -

very little room and the ever present rotting reindeer hair from their sleeping bags. It is all credit to their navigator Frank Worsley that they reached South Georgia at all....but then they had had to land on the wrong side of the island due to conditions.....but read the book - definitely read it.....This book would make a great adventure book to introduce Antarctic exploration for younger children or teenagers as it is so vivid and so exciting. They are chased by killer whales and leopard seals, they are constantly fighting the elements and they are if nothing else a very human group of people. This is one of the best books of survival I have ever read and is highly recommended.

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