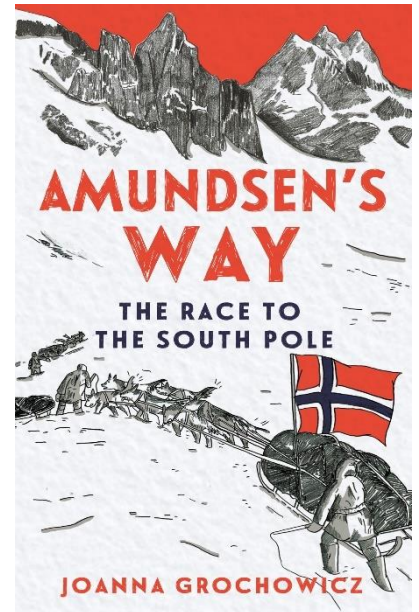


Amundsen's Way

By Joanna Grochowicz

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Paperback narrative non-fiction
Recommended for 10-14-year-olds



Summary

But how will history view Roald Amundsen? he wonders to himself. Will I be remembered for my dedication, my discipline, my daring deeds? Or only for my deception?

Roald Amundsen - hero or villain? Amundsen's South Polar conquest is an extraordinary tale that combines risk, intrigue and personal conflict. A man of striking intelligence and a single-minded thirst for world records, Amundsen's astute planning and shrewd strategy propelled him into first place. Such a man, with everything to lose, will stop at nothing to secure his goal. His story is a testament to utter brilliance and ruthlessness.

From the author of the highly acclaimed *Into the White*, and full of life-threatening challenges, deception, disappointments and triumph, *Amundsen's Way* is an adventure story in the purest sense.



Although thoroughly researched and historically accurate, *Amundsen's Way's* real strength lies in its exciting novelistic approach. Dialogue, detailed descriptions and scene setting, an omnipresent narrator (who gives us interiority i.e., taking us inside the characters' consciousness) and descriptions of the action from all angles combine to create a remarkably moving and suspenseful story.

Use in the curriculum

Like the author's previous book, *Into the White*, *Amundsen's Way* is an excellent resource for students studying explorers or Antarctic history and geography at upper primary and lower secondary levels. Its gripping storytelling and fascinating details will engage the most reluctant reader.

NZ curriculum: Science and Social Sciences 1-5

- Planet Earth and Beyond
- Place and Environment
- Continuity and Change

Visit <https://www.allenandunwin.com/resources/for-teachers> for free down-loadable teachers notes, reviews by teachers, extracts and more. And sign up to the Allen & Unwin e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on new resources!

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Australian Curriculum: Science and HASS

The Australian Curriculum identifies the following areas suitable for teaching about Antarctica:

- Year 4 Humanities and Social Sciences / Inquiry and skills / Analysing / ACHASSI078
- Year 5 Humanities and Social Sciences / Knowledge and Understanding / Geography / ACHASSK113
- Year 6 Science / Science Understanding / Biological sciences / ACSSU094
- Year 8 Humanities and Social Sciences / Geographical Knowledge and Understanding / Unit 1: Landforms and landscapes / ACHGK048

The Arts, Design and Technology, and Health and PE

The detailed descriptions of 'Framheim' and other camps will help students create models and dioramas. They could learn basic sewing machine and mending skills.

Students can calculate their own everyday calorie needs and compare them to the energy needed to survive in Antarctica. They can create a menu and food list and pack their own survival pack.

English, Philosophy and Personal Development

The text particularly lends itself to discussions about character, ethics and a comparison of 19th century and contemporary values. What is heroism? Where does the urge to dangerous adventure come from? 'Success at all costs'?

Themes

- Antarctica
- survival
- courage
- explorers
- leadership
- behaviour of isolated groups
- cooperation
- historical heroes

From the author...

'There are aspects of [Amundsen's] story that are unpalatable in the extreme. His use and abuse of sledging dogs appear unacceptable to a modern reader as do the lies and deception he deemed a necessary evil in mounting a successful polar campaign. The harsh treatment meted out to certain members of his team during his assault on the South Pole would result in legal action nowadays.

'Those who prefer heroes with a spotless character will be soundly disappointed with Amundsen. But Roald Amundsen offers too many compelling character qualities to simply be able to write him off as an egocentric bully. Here is a man of striking intelligence whose brilliance in planning and anticipating the moves of his opponent propelled him into first place. His single-minded thirst for world records in the most unforgiving environments betrays a distinctly 20th century mindset. In this respect he is the undisputed forerunner of the many modern-day explorers who must tackle increasingly perilous exploits in order to secure sponsors who are only too happy to fuel an adventurer's adrenalin addiction.'

— Joanna Grochowicz



Discussion questions

1. Break your class into groups of three and ask each group to find answers to the following questions:
 - Who was Roald Amundsen?
 - What were the main objectives of Amundsen's South Pole expedition?
 - How is Robert Falcon Scott connected to Amundsen's expedition?
 - Name three things that historians credit for Amundsen's success in reaching the South Pole.
 - To what city did Amundsen travel after his South Pole expedition? What was the purpose of his visit?
 - Did Amundsen stop exploring after reaching the South Pole?
2. Click here
https://www.google.com/search?q=Roald+Amundsen%27s+dogs+and+the+south+pole&client=firefox-b-d&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjFIdq_n9jgAhXbfX0KHUugBKUQ_AUIDy_gC&biw=1680&bih=936
for some amazing photographs taken during Amundsen's South Pole expedition. Print these images and place them around your classroom.
3. Ask students to calculate how much food and water they would require for a two-month journey. Encourage them to make a list and include other vital things they might need to take. How much would they need for each day? How much would their rations weigh? How could they make their 'rations' stretch if their journey took longer than planned? Is there anything they could cut out completely?
4. Make a list of ideal characteristics for individuals in a team setting out on an extreme challenge that involves great physical danger. Can you assign any of these characteristics to individual men on the South Pole expedition team? Give examples of incidents in *Amundsen's Way* to illustrate your answer.
5. *The chief is a man obsessed by one goal to the exclusion of all others. Nothing must stand in his way. Amundsen loads his gun and shoots all three pups.* (p. 194)
Their most esteemed leader, a man of steel and will and obsession; Helmer flows in his tracks with a mixture of admiration, trust and even love swelling in his chest as he considers the extent to which Amundsen has shaped his destiny. He is a man like no other, a personage of such depth and complexity that Helmer doubts he will ever get the full measure of Roald Amundsen. (p. 257)
Why do you think that Roald Amundsen is sometimes described as a villain and not a hero? Give examples from the book to illustrate your answer.
6. Why might being a Norwegian have been an advantage for Amundsen?
7. (a) List the advantages/disadvantages of relying on animals to pull equipment and provisions.
(b)...*There is no justice in feeding a loyal and hardworking dog to the pack, and Helmer feels vile as he divvies up the remains. Within a few hours, there is no proof that Helge*

made it all the way to the South Pole, beyond a few teeth and the shaggy tip of his tail left on the snow. (p. 263)

Do you think Amundsen's treatment of his dogs is justified? How does it differ from our modern view of the treatment of animals?

1. Make a list of the challenges faced by Amundsen and his men on the Antarctic continent. Divide this list into physical and mental challenges. Which is the more difficult: physical or mental?
2. Why do you think the author intersperses the story with 'flashbacks' to previous journeys? Choose one such 'flashback' and explain its significance to the South Pole expedition.
3. Should this book be categorised as fiction or non-fiction? Give specific reasons in your answer.

The author

Joanna Grochowicz's narrative non-fiction is meticulously researched and compellingly told. By fusing the real and the imagined in her stories of early Antarctic exploration, she reveals the human aspirations and tragedies that have shaped our understanding of what remains an utterly inhuman place. As an Antarctic writer and communicator, Joanna believes strongly that engaging with Antarctic history encourages a deeper connection with a globally significant continent that few will ever visit. While focusing on polar exploration, her ever-popular school sessions guide students in examining the continued importance of resilience, perseverance and curiosity in all human endeavours.

