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Shackleton's Journey

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

Editors Choice

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Recently Scott and his heroic but tragic attempt to reach the South Pole has been very much revisited and is a familiar story even to the young. Shackleton's attempt to cross the Antarctic continent is, perhaps, less well known. Here, the author, William Grill, takes up the challenge. He is not writing a biography of Shackleton - indeed, such details are kept to the minimum (occasionally one might have liked a few more - why if he was part of Scott's expedition did he survive? In fact he was sent home early on health grounds). Rather, the narrative is taken up with the actual expedition. The reader is told about the ship, the *Endurance*, and how it was constructed; the composition of the team; the equipment; and then the journey itself. Aimed at a young readership, Year 6 and up, Grill keeps the text brief interspersing it with his idiosyncratic illustrations. These range from visual lists of tiny figures or vignettes to dramatic double page spreads evoking the Antarctic landscape. Indeed, this landscape, bleak, empty and overwhelming is emphasised in the white background used throughout against which the tiny figures move.

Immediately arresting in appearance from its cover on, this is a beautiful book, and an attractive introduction to this heroic - and largely successful - expedition. It is not faultless - the font is almost too small and it has a glossary rather than an index which in itself is incomplete (no note about the *Fram*?). Nevertheless it provides a very welcome antidote to the current image-and-caption approach to information texts, imbuing the story with a real sense of urgency and excitement. As a result, young readers will remember it. Recommended.

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