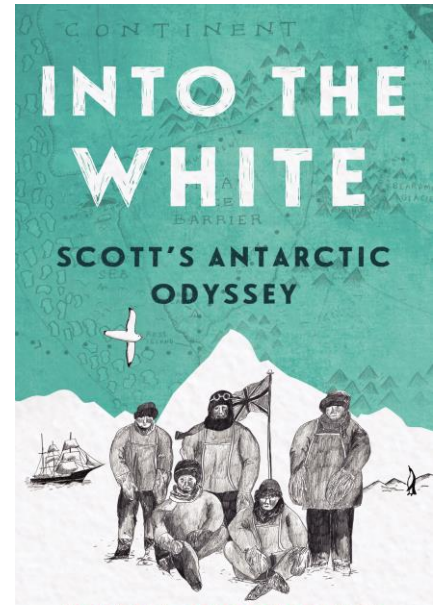


# Into the White:

## Scott's Antarctic Odyssey

By Joanna Grochowicz

May 2017 paperback ISBN 9781760293659  
Recommended for readers aged 10 – 14 years.



### Summary

Much has been written about Robert Falcon Scott and his ill-fated Antarctic expedition, 1910-12. However the story so often fails to move beyond the tent where Scott and his men awaited death. Framed by tragedy, the danger, excitement and accomplishments of the Terra Nova expedition fade into insignificance.

*Into the White* highlights these elements in its retelling of the remarkable two-year expedition. Gruelling hardships at sea involving fierce storms and impenetrable pack ice pale in comparison to the challenges faced by Scott's team on their arrival in Antarctica. Here they face man-eating whales, hidden and potentially deadly crevasses, minus 50 degree blizzards, as well as the agonies of frost-bite, starvation, dehydration and snow blindness. Yet *Into the White* is more than a catalogue of misery. It is also a story of the quest for adventure and scientific knowledge that ultimately drove these men on. And it is about the relationships that were forged and the courage that enabled Scott and his men to push on against all odds and continue to support each other right up until the very end.

The text includes chapter-opening drawings by UK artist Sarah Lippett and original photographs from expedition member Herbert Ponting in a 16-page insert.

### Use in the curriculum

*Into the White* is an excellent resource for students studying explorers at upper primary and lower secondary levels. Its gripping storytelling and fascinating details will engage the most reluctant reader.

### 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

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

Contact Carolyn Walsh, Education Marketing Coordinator,

Ph: +02 8425 0150 Fax: 02 9906 2218 Email: [CarolynW@allenandunwin.com](mailto:CarolynW@allenandunwin.com)

## The Arts, Design and Technology, and Health and PE

Primary classrooms can imitate the men in Scott's expedition through knitting, darning, leatherwork, knotting and cooking.

See the caption of one of the photos: 'Sledging rations include pemmican in a block, biscuits, sugar cubes, tea, butter and cocoa, delivering a total of 4200 calories – inadequate energy for manhauling a sledge.' Older students can study energy conversion and energy requirements for different tasks.

## English

In English classrooms, the text is suitable for studies of all three strands: Language, Literature and Literacy.

### Themes

- Antarctica
- survival
- courage
- tragedy
- cooperation
- exploration
- leadership
- historical heroes
- ethical behaviour

When asked about her book, Joanna Grochowicz revealed the strong motivating influence on her of these themes. She said:

'So much can be achieved through **team work and a sense of shared purpose**. It is a real **triumph of human spirit** that Scott and his men were able to reach the pole with such rudimentary equipment and rations and survive in the midst of such hostile environmental conditions. The extent of their physical endurance is awe inspiring but the fact that the men of the Terra Nova expedition were able to cope with the significant mental strain of venturing into the unknown day after day is testament to Scott's **strong leadership** style and **the unifying power of camaraderie** among men who share a common goal.

'Rather than becoming a source of conflict, **adversity drew the men closer** together. Even as their health deteriorated and their rations dwindled, the men found the strength to **help each other**. When Taff was unable to perform his camp duties, the others shouldered more of the burden to spare him further suffering. Whenever the outlook appeared grim, the men **supported each other emotionally** with humour and reassurances despite having their own grave concerns about their survival. Oates made the **ultimate sacrifice** by walking out into the blizzard to avoid waylaying his team more than necessary.

'Scott carried a heavy burden in terms of his **responsibility** for the polar team's safe return to Cape Evans and as the leader of the expedition. He must have known that their safe return was unlikely and still he pressed on, **never giving up hope and never giving up on his men**. When death seemed inevitable, Scott wrote many letters, to explain their predicament and to thank people for their support. The act of writing must have been pure agony but he saw it as his **final duty** to the men who had given their lives in **the pursuit of greatness**.'

### Style

Although thoroughly researched and historically accurate, *Into the White'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. In particular, students will notice the use of the present tense to tell the story.

The result is a fresh take on a story that has too often been left to dry history books: a story that is far more expansive in its explanations than the diaries and other source material that have survived. Comparison with non-fiction texts about Scott and the Antarctic will reveal numerous differences in language use and text format.

## Discussion questions & activities

**1.** Break your class into groups of three and ask each group to find answers to the following questions:

- Who was Robert Falcon Scott?
- What was the Terra Nova? What do the Latin words 'Terra Nova' mean? Why do you think Scott's expedition was called this?
- What were the main objectives of Scott's 1910 – 12 expedition?
- How is Roald Amundsen connected to Scott's expedition?
- Name three things that went wrong for Scott's expedition.
- Is Scott considered a hero or failure today?
- Where is Scott's diary kept?
- What happened to the Terra Nova after the expedition?

**2.** Click here for some amazing photographs taken during the Terra Nova expedition <http://www.coolantarctica.com/Antarctica%20fact%20file/History/Robert-Falcon-Scott2.php> .

Print these images out and place them around your classroom.

**3.** *Into the White* describes the harrowing journey Wilson, Bowers and Cherry made to collect emperor penguin eggs. What theory did Wilson want to prove with these eggs and what happened to the eggs after they left Antarctica?

**4.** 'It is one of the most important tasks of his life...' p50. Ask students to calculate how much food and water they would require for a three-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?

**5.** Encourage students to nominate three of their favourite members of the expedition and give reasons for why they chose them. Did they dislike any of the other characters? Why?

**6.** List the advantages/disadvantages of man-hauled sledges vs. relying on animals to pull equipment and provisions.

**7.** Make a list of the hazards faced by Scott and his men on the Antarctic continent. Discuss what things went wrong with his expedition. Could he have planned things differently? Was any one person to blame? Did bad luck play a part in the tragedy?

**8.** 'It is better to have tried and failed, than to have never tried at all.' Divide the class into two groups. The first group should argue this quote in the affirmative in relation to the Terra Nova expedition. The second group should argue in the negative.

## About the author...



Joanna Grochowicz was born in Auckland, New Zealand in 1972. Foreign languages dominated her education both at school and university where she earned a BA in French/Russian and an MA in Russian.

Having embarked on a career as a business writer, working in corporate and not-for-profit sectors, Joanna took a year off in 2007 to complete a Masters of Creative Writing, fulfilling a long-held desire to write a novel based on her experiences as an exchange student in the South of France in 1990. Rejections did not discourage her! Another book followed and met with success. Joanna is married with two boys and lives in New Zealand.

### Joanna says:

The idea for writing this book came about when I tried to find an abridged version of Scott's diaries that would be suitable to read to my children – two boys, then aged 10 and 12. Having read the diaries myself, I was struck by the gripping nature of the story. Scott's diaries were pure adventure.

I wanted to retell the Terra Nova story for older children who have an avid interest in Antarctica and are hungry for more information. But my focus has always been on telling a great story and I believe this has all the elements of truly great adventure – storms at sea, impenetrable sea ice, tricky provisioning, humour, hubris, a cast of memorable characters, man-eating whales, viscous dogs, unruly ponies, crevasses, blizzards, scientific discovery and scientific failure, unpalatable food, extreme temperatures, and equal measures of hunger, agony and pathos.

### Why I write

People fascinate me. I love stereotypes and clichéd individuals, I love oddballs and misfits, saints and creeps, the selfish, the needy, the dreary, the nerdy and the enormous tangle of real-life characters you come across at work, in the mall, on the radio and on the sidelines of football matches.

Of course, history offers a boundless source of fascinating characters to reanimate. At school, history bored me senseless. I hated the endless parade of dates and dusty events that seemed so distant and unrelated to my teenage reality. I wanted gossip and scandal like in my *Smash Hits* magazines. There was certainly no gossip or scandal in any of our textbooks. But history doesn't make itself. People make history. And people all have secrets and aspirations and fears and regrets.

Another reason I like writing about historical events is that there is a very clear beginning, middle and an end and you can't mess with that. With real events there's little straying from the chronology and you can't go wild with the facts. Generally the story is a good one because it's remembered years later. Maybe it was a great story and people have forgotten that it happened. Perhaps people think they know the story when in fact they only know part of the story. It can be a wonderful thing to rehabilitate a great story - like restoring a dilapidated castle and making it magnificent again.