

Ernest Shackleton: Overcoming Adversity Through Great Leadership

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I researched my project for National History Day independently. I have always found exploration, survival stories, and my English and Irish heritage fascinating. I contacted my grandmother who studies genealogy and world history to ponder over what topic might capture my interest. She told me about a man from her hometown who travelled with Ernest Shackleton, an explorer who defied all odds of survival on a journey to cross Antarctica. Shackleton's connection to Ireland and England drew me in, and his life story itself was full of triumph and tragedy which captivated me even more. Since Shackleton was a man of many adventures, I narrowed my topic down to his Trans-Antarctic Expedition because of the obstacles he had to overcome in life threatening circumstances while also setting a heroic example for his hopeless crew. This specific story was full of exploration, survival, and related back to my own heritage. I chose to do my project independently due to the fact I felt I could best present his adventure on a more personal level if I were working alone than in a joint effort.

When I began my research, I discovered that Shackleton wrote an autobiography, *South: the Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition*. The book gave a primary first person view on the adversities that Shackleton endured, along with the triumphs he worked so hard to achieve. I conducted further research to find the different perspectives of the crew members, like the crew photographer Frank Hurley, to bring the story all together. A highlight of my research was performing an interview with Jonathan Shackleton, Ernest's cousin, who provided me with great quotes which are seen in my documentary. I gained a greater understanding of Shackleton's overall impact on exploration, along with statistics of the climate he overcame on his journey in Antarctica through these sources.

Over all the other project categories, I felt a documentary best presented the hardships and glories of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition. My primary reason for choosing a documentary is because of the incredible photographs taken by Frank Hurley, who took hundreds of captivating images while on the Trans-Antarctic Expedition. My documentary also gives the audience a glimpse into an experience the other categories could not do. In my documentary I was able to incorporate his heritage by including Irish-English traditional music, which develops the overall atmosphere in the film.

Ernest Shackleton's Trans-Antarctic Expedition showcases the theme of triumph and tragedy in every aspect. With every mental and physical setback Shackleton and his crew faced, they triumphantly persevered through the tragedy. When the ship sank and the men were stranded at sea for two years, Shackleton's heroic character led them to rescue despite all that they had been through. The journey is an example of how tragedies and failures in life can become triumphant victories if one can overcome the adversities they are challenged with.