

Over the Ice

Borge Ousland and Mike Horn huddled in their tent and listened to the ice cracking around them. Strong winds buffeted the tent sides as the temperature dipped to thirty degrees below zero. Mike's hands were frostbitten. They were running out of food. How had they gotten to this point? And could they go on?

Borge, a Norwegian explorer, and Mike, a South African adventurer had teamed up for the trip of a lifetime. They had both completed many expeditions in the past, but this journey would be one of the most dangerous. At the ages of 53 and 57, they were going to ski across the melting Arctic ice cap.

On August 28, 2019, Borge and Mike began their adventure. As they sailed north to their starting point, they passed whales and birds migrating south. "It felt like we were going the wrong direction," Mike admitted.

Continuing north, the ocean began to freeze. Eventually they reached the Arctic ice cap. Here they left the boat and began their ski trek. Their goal was to ski 1,000 miles across the entire cap. They each pulled sleds that weighed 410 pounds, filled with supplies to last 85 days. They would meet the boat again when they reached the other side.

The explorers chose September for their journey because the ice would be easier to navigate. That choice meant that they completed much of their expedition without the sun. Eleven days into their trip, the sun set for good. It would not rise again in the Arctic for six months. They skied in an extended sunset for a while, and then they were in the dark.

Borge and Mike encountered many hardships as they made their way across the ice. There were threatening polar bears and punishing storms. There were big cracks in the ice that they had to get over without getting wet. Getting wet in the Arctic can be dangerous, as the moisture can lead to frostbite. They also experienced some wonderful moments, like seeing the northern lights.

Finally, on day 36, they reached the North Pole. Although it wasn't quite half way, it felt like a milestone. They took a photo and ate a fruitcake. And then they pressed on.

As they neared the end of their journey, things looked grim. The ice was starting to crack again, and they were running out of food. Finally, on day 87, they made it to the other side. They met the boat, broken and battered, but triumphant.

Borge and Mike accomplished a feat that will never be repeated. The ice cap is shrinking. The Arctic is warming at double the rate of the rest of the earth. Scientists predict that within twenty years there will be no ice at all in the



Arctic in September. Borge and Mike wanted to see the changes for themselves. They did what no one ever had, and due to climate change, what no one ever will again. Were the risks and challenges worth it? Borge and Mike say yes!



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. How many miles were Borge and Mike planning to ski?
 - a. 87
 - b. 410
 - c. 1,000
 - d. 53

2. Why is getting wet dangerous in the Arctic?
 - a. It attracts polar bears
 - b. It leads to frostbite
 - c. It makes you hungrier
 - d. It is worse in the dark

3. How do you think Borge and Mike felt when they reached the North Pole?
 - a. Defeated to be less than half way
 - b. Worried about polar bears
 - c. Proud to have made it so far
 - d. Angry about who would take the photo

4. Which of the following is probably NOT a reason that Borge and Mike think the trip was worth it?
 - a. They are proud to have survived
 - b. They are glad to have seen the arctic cap before climate change melts it
 - c. They are happy to have experienced the northern lights
 - d. They got to eat fruitcake

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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