

## Phase 4: Synthesis

### Read Article: *Shackleton's Leadership Role,*

*During the "Heroic Age of Exploration," the period in which Shackleton's 1914-1916 British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition took place, Antarctic expeditions often became ordeals of suffering. At the time, polar explorers were revered for their sacrifices and held up as heroes, albeit often tragic ones.*

*At this same time, Shackleton **distinguished** himself as a hero, not only among the masses, but also among the 27 men—officers, scientists and seamen—who were his crew members on the expedition. Shackleton earned the respect of these men, not to mention the respect of millions today, by being a leader who put his men's well-being, both mental and physical, above all else.*

*Shackleton's **extraordinary** leadership skills contributed to these 27 men successfully braving the nearly two years they were stranded in the Antarctic, when the expedition ship, the *Endurance*, was trapped and then crushed in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea.*

*Shackleton's accomplishment as a leader started with **his selection of the *Endurance* crew**. He handpicked some members, including two who had served him faithfully and performed exceptionally on a previous expedition. To recruit the rest, it is said that he posted the following notice:*

*Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.*

*Shackleton's **recruitment** notice was brutally honest about the discomforts and dangers to be faced. When the *Endurance* crew members indeed encountered all of the above-mentioned conditions, they accepted them as best they could, for they had been forewarned. And they looked to Shackleton, whom they called "The Boss," for guidance about how to survive the elements, both physically and emotionally.*

*When the *Endurance* became locked in pack ice, Shackleton ordered the men **to pursue every possible means of extricating the ship from the icy jaws of the Weddell Sea**, including using ice picks and saws in attempts to reach leads sighted sometimes hundreds of yards away. While these labors were ultimately futile, it was useful to have the men experience this firsthand, so they would neither question their predicament of having to "winter in the pack" nor become bitter with "what ifs," such as "If we had only been allowed to cut our way out of the ice, we'd have reached the Antarctic continent by now."*

*Shackleton's **calm and confidence** in the more dire circumstances were heartening to his crew. Commenting on Shackleton's reaction to their inability to free the *Endurance* from the ice, Alexander Macklin, the ship's doctor, said, "It was at this moment Shackleton...showed one of his sparks of real greatness. He did not...show...the slightest sign of disappointment. He told us simply and calmly that we would have to spend the winter in the pack."*

*Shackleton sustained morale and created a unified team by keeping everyone busy—and equal. For example, during the long months in which the crew lived on the *Endurance* as a winter station, Shackleton ignored the predominant class system of the time and had scientists scrubbing floors alongside seaman and university professors eating beside Yorkshire fisherman.*

*In addition, Shackleton **encouraged more than work-based camaraderie**. The men played football on the ice, participated in nightly sing-alongs and toasts to loved ones back home, organized highly competitive dog-sled races—and even collectively shaved their heads, posing for expedition photographer Frank Hurley. In the few circumstances in which crew members did not subscribe to the **teamwork philosophy**, such as when seaman John Vincent was reported to be bullying others, Shackleton swiftly **reprimanded** them, setting an example. Called to Shackleton's cabin, Vincent **left it humbled and demoted**.*

While Shackleton was called "The Boss" by his men, he **did not differentiate himself from them**. When the crew moved off the debilitated ship to a camp on the ice, Shackleton ensured that **neither he nor his officers received preferential treatment**.

"There was only 18 skin [sleeping] bags & we cast lots for them," wrote ship's carpenter Chippy McNeish. "I was lucky for the first time in my life for I drew one."

"There was some crooked work in the drawing," able seaman Bakewell wrote, "as Sir Ernest, Mr. Wild... Captain Worsley and some of the other officers all drew wool [sleeping] bags. The fine warm fur bags all went to the men under them."

In addition, in an attempt to help his crew get over the trauma of abandoning the *Endurance*, Shackleton **literally served his men: Rising early in the morning, he made hot milk and hand-delivered it to every tent in the camp**.

Shackleton's **mantra of unity and show of humanity was infectious**. While his men were suffering from the most terrible deprivation, they often rose to his example and showed tremendous compassion for each other. When First Officer Lionel Greenstreet spilled his much-needed milk on the ice, he seemed almost despondent over the loss, and, one by one, the seven men who shared his tent silently poured some of their equally precious ration into his mug, refilling it.

During the brutal, seven-day lifeboat journey to Elephant Island, Shackleton **literally stood tall, boosting the morale of his suffering men by standing at the tiller, hour after hour**. Later, during the 17-day sail to South Georgia Island, **Shackleton monitored the health of his five companions constantly**. Captain Frank Worsley later wrote, "Whenever Shackleton notices that a man seems extra cold and shivering, he **immediately orders another hot drink served to all**." Worsley explained that Shackleton was **careful not to single out the man suffering the most**, for he would not want to frighten him about his condition.

In the face of changing circumstances and constant danger, Shackleton **remained positive and decisive**, which **buoyed** his crew. Further, throughout the 22-month *Endurance* expedition, Shackleton was able to bring the best in each of his men. **Each crew member contributed to the team's survival**, from Captain Frank Worsley, whose exceptional navigation guided the men to both Elephant and South Georgia Islands; to carpenter Chippy McNeish, who reinforced the lifeboats; to cook Charles Green, who created meals day after day with limited resources; to Alexander Macklin and James McIlroy, the two doctors, who saved steward Perce Blackborow from gangrene resulting from frostbite; to second-in-command Frank Wild, who served as leader of the 21 men on Elephant Island after the departure of Shackleton and companions for South Georgia.

**Twenty-eight ordinary-turned-extraordinary men, led by Shackleton's example**, survived nearly two years of unimaginable hardship at the end of the Earth.

Read: *Shackleton's 'disastrous leadership caused the deaths of three explorers'* Telegraph  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/antarctica/1451419/Shackletonsdisastrousleadershipcausedthedeathsofthreeexplorers.html>

*Shackleton's 'disastrous leadership' caused the deaths of three explorers' By Tony Paterson 12:01AM GMT 11 Jan 2004* For decades, Sir Ernest Shackleton has been regarded as a hero for saving the crew of the *Endurance* during his failed South Pole expedition of 1914/16. The rescue he mounted has inspired a recent spate of books and television programs, and prompted management training schools to identify him as an example for the corporate world.

Yet in a new book due to be published in April, two Antarctic historians from New Zealand who have researched the fate of Sir Ernest's advance supply team for the first time say that three members froze to death as a **result of bad leadership, faulty planning and woefully short supplies**. "As leader of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, **Shackleton inevitably bore responsibility for their deaths**," said Richard McElrea, one of the authors of *Polar Castaways*. The book includes testimony from the diary of Ernest Joyce, one of the members of the ill fated party. "**Nobody would consider undertaking such a trip with such miserable equipment for a single second**," he wrote.

Sir Ernest is best known for sailing 800 miles from the Antarctic to South Georgia in the South Atlantic in a 23ft boat in 1915 after *Endurance*, his main ship, was crushed by pack ice and sank. The explorer and his crew survived an epic journey through some of the world's most **treacherous seas with no loss of life**.

*Polar Castaways* tells the little known story of the "Ross Sea party" a team of 10 men dispatched from Tasmania to the Antarctic in 1914 to **deposit advance supplies for Sir Ernest**, who had planned to cross the South Pole from the opposite side of the continent until his ship sank.

According to David Harrowfield, Mr McElrea's coauthor, "Shackleton had given the Ross Sea party tasks which were **almost impossible to fulfil**". The party was **beset by squabbles, supply shortages, bad planning and ultimately death**. Aneas Mackintosh, who had been selected by Sir Ernest as team leader but **turned out to be fatally hotheaded**, was blown out to sea on drifting pack ice, together with Victor Hayward, another expedition member. The Rev Arnold Spencer Smith, the team's padre, contracted scurvy and froze to death.

Sir Ernest gives only scant mention of their plight in South, his own account of his 1914 expedition. Mr. McElrea said his book was based on previously unpublished interviews that he and his coauthor conducted with survivors of the expedition during the 1970s and 1980s. Their task was to deposit more than two tons of supplies at five separate depot camps along Sir Ernest's planned route a trip that involved covering a distance of more than 2,000 miles on dog sledges across pack ice plagued by relentless blizzards and sudden thaws.

The historians' new account begins with the explorers' realization that Sir Ernest's **London based supply team had failed to deliver almost half the equipment promised for the expedition a bad start**. Once it had set off, the party ran **into difficulties almost immediately**. Their ship, the *Aurora*, which was moored according to instructions set down by Sir Ernest, snapped its anchor cables in a storm and was blown out to sea with most of the supplies aboard. The ship drifted in ice for nearly a year before it could be freed, leaving the 10 man party marooned ashore with pitifully inadequate provisions.

Members of the party had to sew makeshift footwear made out of sealskin sleeping bags and trousers were cut from the remains of discarded tents. The party **stuck to its task**, but **squabbles broke out after Mackintosh**, the one eyed explorer selected by Sir Ernest to lead the expedition, **refused to reduce the heavy loads** the team was dragging, even though several men had frost boils and most of the dogs had died from exposure.

*Discipline continued to deteriorate and the food ration was reduced to eight sugar lumps and a biscuit a day. Spencer Smith, who was just 31, died from scurvy, while Mackintosh had to be strapped to a sledge after becoming delirious. The party finally made it back to a camp at McMurdo sound in March 1916 after a tour that had lasted six months.*

*Two months later, Mackintosh insisted on making a dash across the frozen McMurdo sound to a hut with better supplies at Cape Evans, 15 miles to the north. "First we save you from death and now you want to risk dying again. **What idiots are we dealing with here!**" Joyce is recorded as saying. Mackintosh nevertheless walked out on to the floating pack ice with fellow explorer Hayward. An hour later, a blizzard blew up and forced the ice out into the sea. **The pair were never seen again.***

*The Ross Sea party was not rescued until January 1917. Men had given their lives in a worthless sacrifice, the historians argue, because Sir Ernest neither crossed the Antarctic nor reached any of the depots they had laid.*

*The London based James Caird Society set up to honour Sir Ernest's memory and named after the boat on which the explorer and his crew made their escape 1/17/2016. Shackleton's 'disastrous leadership caused the deaths of three explorers' Telegraph <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/antarctica/1451419/Shackletonsdisastrousleadershipcausedthedeathsofthreeexplorers.html> 2/2 **rejected claims that the explorer was to blame for the plight of the Ross Sea party.***

*"Shackleton was at the time coping with his own party and its problems on the other side of the continent," said Maj Gen Patrick Fagan, the chairman of the society. "The Ross Sea party lost most of their supplies when their ship was blown away during a blizzard. They consequently developed scurvy and later made errors of rash judgment that we do not think Shackleton would have allowed them to make."*