



The Arctic: an anthology of the finest writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic

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A beautiful literary anthology published to commemorate the International Polar Year—and remind us what we're in danger of losing.

The Arctic and Antarctic ice shelves have been an object of obsession for as long as we've known they existed. Countless explorers, including such legends as Richard Byrd, Ernest Shackleton, and Robert Falcon Scott, have risked their lives to chart their frozen landscapes. Now, for the first time in human history, we are in legitimate danger of seeing polar ice dramatically shrink, break apart, or even disappear. *The Ends of the Earth*, a collection of the very best writing on the Arctic and Antarctic, will simultaneously commemorate four centuries of exploring and scientific study, and make the call for preservation.

Stocked with first-person narratives, cultural histories, nature and science writing, and fiction, this book is a compendium of the greats of their fields: including legendary polar explorers and such writers as Jon Krakauer, Jack London, Diane Ackerman, Barry Lopez, and Ursula K. LeGuin. Edited by two contemporary authorities on exploring and the environment, *The Ends of the Earth* is a memorable collection of terrific writing—and a lasting contribution to the debate over global warming and the future of the polar regions themselves.

About International Polar Year -

International Polar Year (which begins in spring 2007) is a major international science initiative that aims to focus public attention on the polar regions and our effect on them. The last such initiative, the International Geophysical Year in 1957–58, involved 80,000 scientists from 67 countries. This one promises to be bigger still.

The Arctic: an anthology of the finest writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic Details

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From Reader Review The Arctic: an anthology of the finest writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic for online ebook

Janie says

Pure escapism without turning my brain to jelly. These explorers were the first extreme sportsmen, hauling hundreds of pounds of gear over a vast, frozen, unknown landscape, spending 7 sunless weeks stuck in a tent with their comrades. After reading a few excerpts from journals of these explorers, I feel like such a wuss wearing socks to bed when they'd crawled into frozen sleeping bags for a restless night of teeth-chattering. How and why did these guys do what they did, a hundred-plus years ago, some of them in leather shoes for heaven's sake? (Apparently the leather became supper for some of these starving chaps.) I may not get the 'whys' from this book but the descriptions of the landscape are a hint -- hauntingly beautiful, even more captivating knowing that they may not exist today in quite the same way, thanks to global warming.

Claudia Piña says

Me encantó, hay historias muy interesantes y de paso conocí autores nuevos, como Tété-Michel Kpomassie (con quien, por cierto, agrego a Togo a mi lista de lecturas del mundo).

Judy says

Although I had read many of these before, this is a very accessible way to read excerpts from the work of the great explorers in the early 20th century. It also includes more modern experiences and reflections.

Marie says

Togo (A Greenland Christmas) by Tete-Michel Kpomassie

"But we must set ourselves new aims, and go on growing, that one day we may be the respected equals of all other nations."

"They fit me like a pair of gloves, but they're sometimes hard to wear."

"But, you're a strange lot, too with your eight wives and more under one roof, when it's hard enough living with just one!"

Greenland (Songs of the Inuit) by Knud Rasmussen

"These people are quick to change from one extreme of feeling to another."

Russia (Land Ho!) by Valerian Albanov

"Was this a premonition of some great misfortune that I was heading for, with no hope of escape?"

"If you others want to see this miracle, you will have to open your eyes."

Martin says

We knew about global warming and its impact FORTY YEARS AGO. We have done nothing. This book, i found not easy to read but the clear messages of the past, present and the future were gripping.

John Benson says

I read this book along with its companion book, THE ANTARCTIC: AN ANTHOLOGY. It includes many good writings by early explorers and then includes different pieces of writing from fiction writers who lived in or north of the Arctic Circle and writers on the issues of the day that affect the Arctic. Both are good reads.

Steven says

My good friend and colleague Donna got me hooked on the idea of reading about cold places during our hot Texas summers. I've always been interested in exploration in general, and summer is the perfect time to be reading about frostbite, glaciers, penguins and polar bears.

The Ends of the Earth is two anthologies of essays about the Arctic and the Antarctic, each collected by separate editors. I believe this also appears in a 2-volume boxed version, but the edition I read had them back-to-back -- or top-to-bottom-rather. To read the essays about the other end of the world, one has to flip the book over. This tickled me way more than it probably should have.

(As a librarian, I knew that there would have to be one cover that would have to be considered the "front." People just can't deal, otherwise. As I predicted, the publisher and the catalogers, with their north-centric brains, chose the Arctic. The publisher's barcode appeared on the cover for the Antarctic side, while the library's barcode appeared inside the cover of the Arctic side. Just sayin'. This reminded me of an extra-tough cataloging assignment from back in my library school days. But I digress...)

The essays are a wide range of explorer's diaries, fiction stories, journalist's accounts, folk tales and essays by naturalists. They really do work together to invoke the idea of these two very different parts of the world. I found myself wanting more older writing about Antarctica, but it makes sense that its shorter human history would make for newer writing.

There is some great writing within these pages, and I've already selected several full-length titles that I'd like to read from this, including:

The Home of the Blizzard: A True Story of Antarctic Survival by Douglas Mawson
The Worst Journey in the World: Antarctic 1910-1913 by Apsley Cherry-Garrard
Independent People by Halldór Kiljan Laxness

Can't wait! Brrrr!

Ayla says

Had to return to the library before I had finished even half of it.

This was not a subject I was previously interested in, but picked up the book on a whim thinking that it might offer some surprises. There were plenty of intriguing little stories inside, but I think a longer-format description of these arctic and antarctic adventurers would be more satisfying. Good for an introduction.

Also learned: don't think I'm that fond of Jules Verne, after reading an excerpt of his that's included.

Ira Therebel says

Just like the book about Antarctic that I just read and reviewed, this book about Antarctic is extraordinary.

An excellent collection that shows us Arctic in different times, when the early discoverers were going to the Pole to today's global warming struggles, and from different sides. We get to read some great fiction writers such as Jack London and Jules Verne and mainly non fiction written by people who went there. Diaries of discoverers, an analysis of a possibility of a murder during an expedition, details of the beautiful nature and a look at the different native cultures that live there.

Because Arctic has been discovered and populated before the Western civilizations found it, this book unlike the Antarctic one has less about the nature and much more about the native populations. This doesn't make it any less interesting. All the writings about living with the natives offer some very fascinating details about life in a beautiful but a pretty cruel part of the world.

This book just like the Antarctic one is something I am very happy to have read and would recommend anyone interested in travel books and this part of the world.

Chris says

I liked the selections from Antarctica better than those from The Arctic. Perhaps because I read about the southern Pole first? Perhaps the editor, Spofford, had an angle on subject more enjoyable to me than Kolbert, the editor for the North?

Both North and South were mind-expanding reading, though I could have done without the inclusion of the H.P. Lovecraft (which despite what I've said about enjoying the Antarctic selections more, did appear in Spofford's selections).

Krysten says

note: I only read the half about Antarctica. the Arctic doesn't interest me as much.

David says

This fascinating book is an anthology of writings about the Arctic and the Antarctic. Most of the writings are nonfiction, but some are fiction. The author, Elizabeth Kolbert, is really the editor. She wrote a paragraph introduction to each chapter, which helped put the writing into perspective.

Many of the writings were essentially excerpts from diaries of explorers, as they attempted to reach the poles. These diaries are amazing--they detail the incredible hardships that explorers went through in order to approach the poles. In some writings, the explorers were successful, while in others, the explorers had to turn around before reaching their goal, often with some dying along the way. Despite the overwhelming difficulties faced by these explorers, the tone of the diaries did not lapse into sentimentality or self-pity. Some of the diaries were by the expedition leaders, while others were written by other members of the teams. Even when the leaders made obvious mistakes in judgment, the team members did not show resentment, and did not try to second-guess their leaders' decisions in hindsight.

I was quite surprised by a true story of a visitor to a village in Greenland. He described various spats and fights between inhabitants of the village. And then--he described a one-night-a-year event, when the couples in the village participate in a wife-swap!

Many of the writings are dramatic, but incredibly under-stated. For example, there is a diary of a member of the crew of a ship that "wintered over" near Antarctica. The ship was completely surrounded and imprisoned by ice. When the ice was pushed up against the ship, there were horrendous noises, but the ship's hull remained intact. In another story of Antarctic exploration, a diary described how they calculated how much more time a man would have before he died. Then, one night the sick man just wandered off and died alone, in order to prevent his team-mates from having to squander their meager resources on a lost cause!

A couple of the last chapters were about present-day eco-tourism in Antarctica. One chapter was from the point of view of a tourist who seemed a little bit depressed. In another chapter, a tour guide described a hair-raising mishap, when a sledge fell into a deep crevasse, along with herself and a tourist. After being hauled up, the tour guide found the sledge to be irretrievable. Therefore, a long and dangerous hike required non-stop exertion for a few days. This writing left me hanging, not knowing whether they reached their goal.

There is a lot of diversity in the writings contained in this book. There should be something here to please the adventure-seeker in everyone.

Joy says

I love reading about very cold places.

Shara says

I've been meaning to start reading about the Arctic/Antarctic for a while. My research has been hampered by the fact that I didn't know where to start (despite the Idiot's Guide sitting on my bookshelf) and just plain

laziness. But when I saw this book in Barnes & Nobles' Holiday Catalogue, I knew I had to have it. I marched to the store, found there only copy, and then debated: it's a hard cover, do I really want a hard cover? Then, a magical thing happened: I flipped the book over, and there was the cover again. Wait, what? So I flip the book over AGAIN, and finally understand: one half of it is devoted to the Arctic, then you flip it over for the Antarctic. It's a flip book![return][return]Well, that lovely gimmick sold me right then and there. And the reason I started reading it right away was because I'm doing research, and reading about other peoples' experiences (real or fictional) in these kinds of conditions would be a vast help.[return][return]It was. But let's focus on the book. It's a mix of travelogues, essays, short stories and novel excerpts, some fiction, some not. One thing I would like to note right away: in Amazon's product description, which comes from the publishing company's product description, it's mentioned that there's writings from Jon Krakauer and Ursula K. LeGuin. This is not true, so I'm really puzzling at who wrote this and why it's posted there. In the link below, I've listed the authors who contribute to the book so that if you're interested, you'll know exactly what you're getting into.[return][return]Obviously, some chapters were dryer than others, but the interesting thing is that the Arctic section really seemed focused on the people, particularly the culture of the Eskimo, whereas the Antarctic section was really focused on the expeditions. From this collection, it sounded like travel in the Antarctic was far harsher than in the Arctic, and that may be true, or it may be a case that the essays selected for the Arctic simply weren't as harsh. Overall, I found the Arctic section to be far more intriguing, though the latter chapters of the Antarctic half were very engaging. Those chapters that were diary excerpts detailing expeditions were sad to me in a way that I couldn't articulate. Something about man's need to claim uncharted land for their countries just irks me, but that didn't diminish the overall enjoyment of the book.[return][return]Coming from someone who hasn't done a great deal of research--nor traveled to--either of the poles, I was glad to find that this book makes for a great starting point. Some excerpts were enough to make me look up the original books on Amazon, and now I've got a handy list for even more research, and that's something I look forward to, even though I'm really not sure when I'll get around to it.[return][return]So if the polar regions interest you, give this book a go. The cover art provided really doesn't do the cover justice: the actual cover (which I can't find online to save my life) is actually white with blue-green detailing the compass rose. I think the print is positioned differently as well. Just so you know. ;)[return][return]For the list of contributors, please click here:
<http://calico-reaction.livejournal.co...>

Alex Miller says

A great compilation of stories from the Arctic, ranging from the bold/crazy folks who set out to explore it in the early days to the dismaying level of threats from the modern world threatening the entire region and its people.
