

# Directions 306028P

Read this story. Then answer questions XX through XX.

This is a fictional portrayal of a real person, eighteen-year-old Perce Blackborrow, who joined the crew of the *Endurance*. Ernest Shackleton commanded the ship in 1914, intending to cross Antarctica. The vessel was crushed by icebergs, and the men were stranded for more than four months before all were rescued.

## Shackleton's Stowaway

by Victoria McKernan

Once on deck, Perce stopped and stared. The flat, endless ice plain they had lived in for months was torn apart. But rather than opening up the sea for their escape, it was trapping them more than ever.

Great jagged slabs of ice were piled up all around the ship, lifting her hull half out of the water, tipping the *Endurance* until she was almost on her side. Deck planks were snapping, and metal halyards screeched like fingernails on a chalkboard. Shackleton stood

on the bridge, calmly giving orders in the chaos. Wild directed the men as they came on deck.

"Billy," Wild shouted. "Help McNeish with the lifeboats." The *Endurance* was heeled so far over, the lifeboats on the port side were in danger of being crushed against the ice.

"Blackie, Tim," Wild commanded. "Help get the dogs on board." Dogloo city was a wreck. The dogs howled with fright. Some of the chains had come free, and the loose dogs

ran everywhere. Others were trapped and buried in their dogloos. Huge slabs of ice stuck straight up like tombstones in a giant's graveyard. Perce grabbed an ax in one hand and a pike in the other. It was hard even getting to the dogs through the maze of broken ice. Perce began to chop the chains free. Crean was digging Sampson out of his collapsed dogloo.

"What's happening?" Perce had to shout to be heard over the noise of crunching ice.

"Pressure!" Crean shouted back. "Ice starts to break up, and the current jams it all together. Then the wind catches the broken slabs like sails and pushes it up more."

It was scary to see blocks of ice that weighed ten tons piled up around them like a child's building blocks. Crean freed Sampson and led him to the safety of the ship, with the four grown pups running right behind. Hurley had his hands full with Shakespeare but grabbed another dog from Perce. They bolted in opposite directions, almost pulling him in two. Hurley swore, yanked on the leashes, and muscled the dogs back to his side.

It

was a frantic race, but within ten minutes every dog was securely on board the ship. They were so terrorized, they even forgot to fight. They just cowered in corners and whined.

McNeish came running, as much as anyone could run on the sloping deck.

“She’s sprung fore an’ aft, Boss!” he announced. “There’s two foot of water in the hold, and the pump’s froze up.”

“Very well,” Shackleton said evenly. “Get some men on the hand pumps. Can you stem the leaks?”

“Timbers is split, sir. I might build a cofferdam, though. Might keep the water back from the engines.”

“Take whatever men you need.”

“You two—” Wild pointed at Perce and Tim. “Help Hurley secure the dogs, then relieve the men on the pumps. You there—Bill, Vincent, the rest of you there—get the pikes, let’s try to push some of this ice back from the ship. The rest of you with McNeish.”

They worked all day and all night. McNeish and his crew sloshed waist deep in the freezing water as they tried to stop the leaks. The sailors, officers, and scientists worked shoulder to shoulder. They were so wet and dirty, you could hardly tell one man from another. Fifteen minutes on the hand pumps—fifteen minutes’ rest, half hour chopping at the ice or helping with the dam down below. Perce pounded nails and stuffed blankets into cracks, then went back to the pumps. The labor was extreme. The water was pouring in so fast, they had to pump full out. After five minutes, his arms ached. After ten minutes, his shoulders and neck were in a spasm.

The night became a blur. Once Perce fell asleep while holding a board in place on the dam. Once he found a mug of soup in his hand and didn’t know how it got there. The strangest thing was how the Boss was everywhere all the time. When a shift finished on the pumps, there he was with mugs of chocolate. When the strips of blanket floated out of the cofferdam, it was Shackleton’s hand that caught them. His clothes were as wet and dirty as any of theirs, but he never rested, never seemed tired.

Finally, late the next morning, the efforts began to show success. Water still came in, but slower. Shackleton ordered an hour’s rest. Charlie had somehow managed to cook with

the galley at a crazy tilt and now dished out big bowls of porridge. The men ate hunched over, too tired to speak. Some fell asleep at the table, their heads beside the empty bowls. And always, the terrible screech and groaning of the pressing ice continued all around them.

What is a central idea of lines 1 through 27 of “Shackleton’s Stowaway”? Use two details from the story to support your response.