

12b The man who ate his boots

Reading

- 1 Work in pairs. You are going to read a review of a book about Arctic expeditions called *The Man Who Ate His Boots*. Discuss the questions.
 - 1 What kind of environment is the Arctic region?
 - 2 What kind of challenges do you think explorers face there?
 - 3 How much do you know about the lifestyles of people who live in the Arctic?
- 2 Read the first paragraph of the book review. Find the following information.
 - 1 the reason for the British expeditions
 - 2 the fate of the expeditions
 - 3 two words to describe the British explorers
- 3 Read the whole review. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?
 - 1 The British explorers learned a lot from the local Inuit people they met.
 - 2 Canvas tents were an appropriate type of shelter.
 - 3 The British wore inadequate clothing.
 - 4 The British pulled their own sledges.
 - 5 The British had no supply of vitamin C to treat scurvy.
- 4 What do you think the title of the book refers to? Tell your partner.

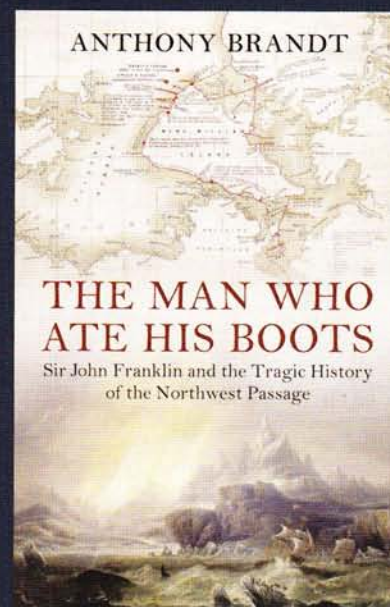
THE MAN WHO ATE HIS BOOTS is a fascinating account of expeditions that went wrong. The book examines the 19th century British search for a route to Asia via the Northwest Passage (a route that goes through the Arctic Ocean). Author Anthony Brandt describes the many attempts by both land and sea that ended in failure and tragedy, including the lavish 1845 expedition led by Sir John Franklin. Brandt shows how these brave, yet sometimes foolish, British explorers could have avoided starvation, frostbite and even death if they had copied the survival techniques of the local Inuit people. Some of the more surprising details the book reveals include:

CANVAS TENTS The British, despite repeatedly watching the Inuit build igloos, insisted on using canvas tents. Tents freeze in sub-zero temperatures and give little insulation to anyone inside them. If the British had learned to build igloos, they would have been warm even in the worst Arctic weather.

CLOTHING If the explorers had worn sealskin and furs like the Inuit, they wouldn't have suffered from the frostbite which was common among the British but rare among the Inuit.

DOG TEAMS Why didn't the British use dog teams to pull their sledges? Hauling sledges themselves was a tradition among British explorers right into the early 20th century. It cost Scott and his men their lives on their return from the South Pole in 1912.

SALAD The British did get something right, however, when Captain Edward Parry grew salad vegetables in boxes on board his ship. It was known that fresh vegetables and fresh meat prevented scurvy, although at that time the reason for this (vitamin C) had not been discovered. Parry's men wouldn't have been as healthy if they hadn't eaten the salads.



And as you'll find out if you read this great book, the 'man' of the title had to eat more than his boots in the end.

- canvas** (n) /'kænvəs/ a type of cotton used in tents and sails.
- frostbite** (n) /'frɒs(t),baɪt/ irreversible damage to the body caused by freezing conditions, usually affecting toes and fingers
- lavish** (adj) /'lævɪʃ/ extravagant, luxurious, excessive
- scurvy** (n) /'skɜ:(r)vi/ an illness affecting the mouth and teeth caused by lack of vitamin C
- starvation** (n) /stɑ:(r)'veɪʃ(ə)n/ death or loss of strength caused by not eating

Grammar third conditional

- 5 Look at these sentences from the review. Which verbs are used to make the third conditional?
- If the British had learned to build igloos, they would have been warm even in the worst Arctic weather.
 - Parry's men wouldn't have been as healthy if they hadn't eaten the salads.
- 6 Look at the sentences in Exercise 5 again. Answer the questions.
- Did the British learn to build igloos?
 - Were they warm in the worst Arctic weather?
 - Were Parry's men healthy?
 - Did they eat salads?

THIRD CONDITIONAL

	would	
If + past perfect,	could (not)	have + past participle
	might	

For further information and practice, see page 90.

- 7 Look at the grammar box. Find two more third conditional sentences in the review. Why is the conditional in the first sentence formed with *could*?

- 8 Look at the example. Then rewrite the sentences using the third conditional and any words in brackets.
- The British got frostbite because they wore inadequate clothing. (furs)
If they'd worn furs, they wouldn't have got frostbite.
 - The men were exhausted because they pulled their own sledges. (dogs)
 - The sledges were heavy because the men took items like china plates and silver dishes. (essential items)
 - Some men got scurvy because they didn't eat enough fresh food. (Inuit food)
 - They became ill because they didn't know their canned food was poisonous.
 - One expedition got stuck in the ice because they believed the Arctic Ocean couldn't freeze. (ask local people)
 - The expeditions weren't successful because they didn't follow local customs.
- 9 Work in pairs. Match the pairs of sentences. Then write a new sentence using the third conditional with *would*, *could* or *might*.
- We should have planned everything better.
 - We got lost.
 - We couldn't ask for help.
 - The local people gave us directions.
 - We forgot to check the museum opening times.
 - We couldn't get into the museum.
 - We got there too late.
 - The holiday was a disaster.
 - We didn't know how to read the road signs.
 - We found the way back to the main road.
 - We should have taken a phrase book.
 - We were dressed in inappropriate clothes.

Speaking

- 10 Think of three times in your life when you had to decide on a course of action. They can be important or trivial moments. Think about the answers to these questions.
- Was it easy or difficult to decide what to do?
 - How did you decide?
 - What would/could have happened if you had done something different?
- 11 Work in pairs. Tell your partner about your decisions. Ask your partner follow-up questions. Would you have done the same things?

When we were in Year 10 at school, we had to choose which foreign language to study.

Oh, so did we. What were your options?

Well, ...

