

# Archives on the Arctic: Connecting to Global Issues with Primary Sources

## Lesson Plan: Racing to the North with Peary and Cook

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**Date:** September 1, 2013

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### Description:

This lesson is part of a unit on Arctic exploration that has students analyze primary source photographs of the Peary and Cook expeditions in their race to the North Pole. Their analyses will lead to a historical fiction writing assignment based on RAFT (role, audience, format and topic).

### Grade Level(s):

Grades 6-9

### Subject(s):

World History, Literature

### Duration:

4 or 5 60-minute class periods

### Goal:

The goal is to engage students in analyzing primary source photographs.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Analyze primary resources;
- Create a writing piece focused on audience and format; and
- Revise writing.

### Standards:

- This lesson meets the following Alaska State Standards:
  - A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that links the past to the present and the future.
    - Understand that history relies on the interpretation of evidence; and
    - Understand that history is a narrative told in many voices and expresses various perspectives of historical experience.
  - A student should develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry.
    - Use historical data from a variety of primary resources.
- This lesson meets Common Core Literacy Standards:
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## **Background Information:**

- Background article on the race to the North Pole between Peary and Cook: Henderson, Bruce. "Who Discovered the Arctic?" *Smithsonian Magazine*. 4 2009: n. page. Web. 26 Jun. 2013. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Cook-vs-Peary.html>
- For more information on RAFT writing projects, visit the *readwritethink* website for the article "Using the RAFT Writing Strategy" at <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/using-raft-writing-strategy-30625.html>.

## **Primary Source Documents/Resources:**

- See Pages 4-5: Kissel, Laura and Lynn Lay. "Who Got There First? The North Pole Controversies." *Beyond Penguins and Polar Bears*. University of Ohio. Retrieved 8 Aug 2013 from: <http://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/polar-explorers/who-got-there-first-the-north-pole-controversies>
- See Pages 6-7: Photo Sources list at the end of this document
- See Page 8: Rubric for RAFT assignment.

## **Materials:**

- Photo Analysis Tool – See <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/>
- Projector
- Student access to internet for research for at least one day

## **Procedures:**

### DAY 1

1. At the start of class, ask students to create a journal list of what comes to mind when they hear the word "Arctic." Give students 2-5 minutes to brainstorm a list. When the time is up, have students share some of their items.
2. Tell the students they will explore the Arctic by researching and writing about the Peary and Cook expeditions. Ask what is meant by "expedition". As a class, generate a definition and compare it to a dictionary definition.
3. Read the *Competing Claims* section of the article "Who Got There First? The North Pole Controversies" as a class for background information for the students. (See Pages 4-5 below).
4. Reveal that they will be analyzing primary source photos from the expeditions. Demonstrate the use of the Photo Analysis Tool by analyzing one Peary and Cook photo together as a class.
5. Once it is clear that students understand how to use the Photo Analysis Tool, divide class in to groups of 3-5 students. Give each group 4 copies of the Photo Analysis Tool and a set of photos numbered for easy reference for the students. Have groups chose a recorder. Have students find photo number 1 and allow them 5-10 minutes to analyze the photo using the Photo Analysis Tool. Move students on to photos 2 through 4.
6. Lead the class in a discussion of 1) their observations by projecting the photos and asking groups to share analyses; and 2) their historical understanding based on the following inquiries: What did you learn about this event from the photos? What can historians learn about an event by looking at photos? What can historians not learn from photos? If a historian was researching the Peary and Cook expeditions, what other primary sources would a historian to want to use?

### DAY 2

1. Introduce the RAFT (Role, Audience, Format and Topic) writing project to the students. Explain that they will be writing a short creative piece of writing based on the expeditions' historical events. This means that--although their topic will be the expeditions--they will need to choose the role, audience and format for their writing. For example, a student could choose to write from the perspective of an Inuit crew member writing a letter home to his family or write from the perspective of Peary in Peary's personal journal. The format can be limited to a journal entry or letter home or open to other formats such as *Facebook* posts made by a crew member while on the expedition.

2. Allow students the remainder of the class period to conduct additional Internet research or provide additional articles for further background information. Guide students to appropriate websites as needed.

#### DAY 3-4

Students write using the RAFT model.

#### DAY 5

Students edit their writing through peer editing or other method typically used in class.

#### **Evaluation/Assessment:**

There are many rubrics available on the internet for assessing RAFT writing assignments if the rubric provided on Page 8 below does not suit.

#### **Possible Extension:**

- View the Smithsonian podcast *The North Pole Controversy*, all about the Peary and Cook expeditions and the ensuing controversy. The show can be downloaded through iTunes. For more information on the show, search Smithsonian channel website at <http://www.smithsonianchannel.com/sc/web/show/137272/the-north-pole-conspiracy>.
- *Breaking the Ice: Who Controls the Northwest Passage? Lesson Plan*. This lesson plan was created by Marianne Kenney after participating in the annual STUDY CANADA Summer Institute for K-12 Educators. Her lesson leads to a classroom debate on who controls the Northwest Passage and, therefore, the Arctic. [http://www.k12studycanada.org/files/lesson\\_plans/2009SCSI\\_KenneyM\\_WhoControlsNWPassage\\_Gr\\_9\\_12.pdf](http://www.k12studycanada.org/files/lesson_plans/2009SCSI_KenneyM_WhoControlsNWPassage_Gr_9_12.pdf)
- *National Geographic Emerging Explorers*. Use the resources on this website to extend the lesson to the emerging explorers. See [http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/topics/emerging-explorers/?ar\\_a=1](http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/topics/emerging-explorers/?ar_a=1).

## Who Got There First? The North Pole Controversies

If you want to go somewhere you've never been, what do you do first? Pull up MapQuest on your web browser and input your destination? Or, do you have a GPS unit for your car? Maybe you use a printed map or an atlas. Back in the early days of polar discovery, none of these tools were available. In fact, much of the Arctic and Antarctic wasn't even mapped yet.

### COMPETING CLAIMS

In 1909 a bitter controversy involved two American explorers, Frederick A. Cook and Robert E. Peary. Both claimed to be first to reach the North Pole on foot.

Finding the North Pole is tricky. Unlike the South Pole, which lies on a land mass, the North Pole is actually in a vast sea covered by floating ice. Since the ice is constantly in motion, planting a flag or otherwise marking the spot is futile. In addition, magnetic compasses are rendered useless in the polar regions due to the magnetic field at the poles.

Determining one's position, then, is based on calculations using a chronometer – basically a highly efficient time piece – and a sextant – a navigational instrument that allowed an explorer to compute latitude based on the position of the sun.



Frederick A. Cook in furs, circa 1909. Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, RG 56.17, image #34\_2a.



Robert E. Peary, circa 1909. Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, RG 56.17, image #34\_34y.

In September of 1909, Frederick A. Cook, a medical doctor from New York, announced that he and two Inuit companions had reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908. He claimed that bad weather conditions and drifting ice had prohibited his southward return and he and his companions were forced to winter over in an ice cave. A week later, Robert E. Peary, a civil engineer and a commander in the U.S. Navy, announced that he had reached the North Pole, accompanied by his long-time companion Matthew Henson, and he denounced Cook as a fraud. In any case, Peary had some very powerful sponsors, including the *New York Times* as well as the National Geographic Society.

Though Cook appeared to welcome Peary's announcement and was willing to share the limelight, Peary was furious at Cook's attempt to "steal" his victory. By all accounts, Peary was a driven man, and this was his third attempt at the North Pole. Henson, an African-American, had traveled with Peary on all of his "farthest north" expeditions. Though Peary

recognized Henson's contribution to his success, stating, "Henson was the best man I had with me for this kind of work," he also minimized Henson's role after the fact.

Complicating the situation for Cook was that his claim to have been the first to summit Mt. McKinley (in Alaska) in 1906 had been called into question. Cook's critics felt that if he lied about Mt. McKinley, then certainly he was lying about the North Pole as well. It didn't take long for Peary's claim to overshadow the claim of the rather unknown Cook.

Shortly after they returned from the Pole, Cook and Peary each published their version of the truth in books that discussed their expeditions and discoveries in minute detail. The books became bestsellers and also fueled the public debate.



Cover image from booklet, "At the Pole with Cook and Peary," 1909.  
Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, RG 56.17, image #9\_50.

The burden of proof for polar discoveries lies on the explorer. Without modern methods of GPS mapping and plotting of locations, how was this done? Polar explorers during this time were expected to keep detailed, handwritten diaries of their travels, including navigational calculations. Unlike today, when travelers might blog about their journeys to places unknown, taking hundreds of digital images and video along the way, polar explorers in 1909 were much more limited by their tools. Even radio transmission was limited during this time period; explorers had to get to the nearest populated city in order to share their discoveries with the world.

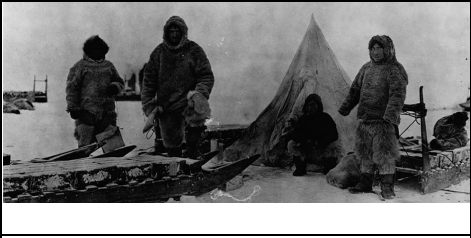
A lot of research and attention has been given to the Cook/Peary North Pole controversy over the last 90 years. Each side has its supporters as well as detractors. Some researchers have concluded that neither one actually got to the North Pole. It is fascinating that there seems to be no end to the debate in sight, even after all of these years. Researchers continue the hunt for primary documents that might lead them to the answers. [The Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program](http://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/polar-explorers/who-got-there-first-the-north-pole-controversies) holds the papers of the Frederick A. Cook Society, while Cook's diaries and other personal papers are held in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Robert E. Peary's papers can be found in the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Source: Kissel, Laura, and Lynn Lay. "Who Got There First? The North Pole Controversies" *Beyond Penguins and Polar Bears*. University of Ohio, n.d. Web. 8 Aug 2013. <http://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/polar-explorers/who-got-there-first-the-north-pole-controversies>.

### Frederick Cook and Robert E. Peary Expedition Sources

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><i>Members of Cook's journey expedition at the North Pole, with U.S. flag stuck in igloo, at camp site</i></p> | <p><i>Peary Arctic Expedition</i></p>  | <p><i>Mending near the Pole</i></p>   | <p><i>Map of routes of Cook and Peary</i></p>  |
| <p>Photo of two men with flag in igloo published in 1909.</p>   | <p>From National Geographic website. Photo taken by Robert Peary. From caption: His stalwart crew, pictured here, included Inuits Ooqeah, Ootah, Egingwah, and Seeglo and fellow American Matthew Henson.</p>                                    | <p>Summary of Photo: Member of Frederick Cook's journey to Greenland near the North Pole, seated on dogsled and mending clothing.</p> | <p>Map caption: The claimed routes of Frederick Cook and Robert Peary to the North Pole.</p>   |
|                                  |    |    |   |
| <p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695567">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695567</a></p>      | <p><a href="http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wallpaper/photography/photos/north-pole-expeditions/peary-arctic-expedition">http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wallpaper/photography/photos/north-pole-expeditions/peary-arctic-expedition</a></p> | <p><a href="http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695580">http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695580</a></p>                          | <p><a href="http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ultimedia/photos/?c=y&amp;articleID=41382862">http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ultimedia/photos/?c=y&amp;articleID=41382862</a></p> |

**Frederick Cook and Robert E. Peary Expedition Sources**

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Unnamed Photo</i>  |  |  |  |
| Caption: George Borup, Dr. Goodsell and three Eskimos at tent with sledges, Arctic Ocean, 1909. Gift of Donald and Miriam MacMillan.  |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |
| <a href="http://www.bowdoin.edu/arctic-museum/exhibitions/2008/northward-over-the-great-ice.shtml">http://www.bowdoin.edu/arctic-museum/exhibitions/2008/northward-over-the-great-ice.shtml</a> |  |  |  |

### Rubric for RAFT Writing Assignment

|                                | <b>4</b>  | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Conventions</b>             | There are no convention errors that divert the reader's attention from the content.   | There are 1-3 convention errors that diverts the reader's attention from the content.  | There are 4-6 convention errors that diverts the reader's attention from the content.  | There are more than 7 convention errors that diverts the reader's attention from the content.  |
| <b>Assumed Role as Writer</b>  | The writer's assumed role is clear. The role fits within the context of the writing.  | The writer's assumed role is clear. The context of the writing is not completely consistent with the writer's role.                    | The writer's assumed role is not clear. However, the context of the writing suggests ideas about what the writer's role is supposed to be. | The writer's assumed role is not clear. The context of the writing does not give any indication of what the writer's role is supposed to be. |
| <b>Recognition of Audience</b> | The audience is appropriate based on the role of the writer and the writing relates to the target audience.                         | The audience is appropriate based on the role of the writer but the writing does not relate to the target audience.                    | The audience is not appropriate based on the role of the writer but the writing does relate to the target audience.                        | The audience is not appropriate based on the role of the writer and the writing does not relate to the target audience.                      |
| <b>Format of the Writing</b>   | The format is appropriate based on the role of the writer and the target audience. The format is consistent throughout the writing. | The format is appropriate based on the role of the writer and the target audience. However, the format changes throughout the writing. | The format is not appropriate based on the role of the writer and the target audience. However, the format changes throughout the writing. | The format is not appropriate based on the role of the writer and the target audience. The format is not consistent throughout the writing.  |
| <b>Defining the Topic</b>      | The topic is clear and well-focused. The topic completely fits the format of the writing.   | The topic is clear and well-focused. However, the topic does not fit the format of the writing.  | The topic is unclear and not at all focused. However, the topic does fit the format of the writing.  | The topic is unclear and not at all focused. The topic does not fit the format of the writing.   |

Batchelor, Kristin. "Individual Rubric for RAFT Writing Assignment." Retrieved August 8, 2013 <http://mysite.verizon.net/kristinbatchelor/ePortfolio/WritingRubricforRAFTWritingActivity.pdf>