

MysteryQuest #42: Support material (Activity Sheet 1)
Background information
[Arctic conditions / Timeline / The peoples involved in this story]

Arctic conditions

The Arctic is located at a high latitude around the North Pole, above the tree line. The weather can be extreme with frequent high winds or blizzards. For those who have the knowledge and skills to live there, the Canadian Arctic is a rich and beautiful land. Detailed knowledge of the climate and geography has been crucial to human survival. Inuit carry this knowledge from their ancestors. But for those who don't have such knowledge and skills, or for those who encounter unexpected conditions, travel in the Arctic can be dangerous.

Visit this link to see an interactive map and the route that Franklin took through the Arctic:
[Franklin's Voyage from England to the Arctic](#)

Visit this link to see an artist's painting of the land and sea in the Arctic:
[Rocks and Ice](#)

Visit this link to see a photograph of Nunavut in the summer today:
[2010 Providence Point Camp](#)

Temperatures	The Arctic has a cold climate. In the area where Franklin's ships became trapped in the sea ice, the average temperature in July (the warmest month) is 8° Celsius. In the winter, the average temperature is -34°C. With the wind chill factor, it can feel like -64°C.
Hours of daylight	The Arctic has long, dark winters and short, light summers. For 57 days in the summer, the sun never sets below the horizon. In the winter, the sun is continuously below the horizon from December 3 to January 8.
Precipitation (rain and snow)	The Arctic is classified as a cold desert because of its low amount of annual precipitation. In the area near where Franklin's ships were trapped, there was never more than 30 cm of snow or 3 mm of rain per year. Even though there is snow and ice, it is a dry place.
Land	The land is made up of the many lakes and granite rocks of the Canadian Shield. There are no trees and not many tall bushes or plants. There are small flowers and berries that grow close to the ground in the summer.
Water	The Arctic Ocean is never warmer than -2°C. The Arctic Ocean is covered with ice that is about 3 or 4 metres thick for most of the year. The ice is always moving, cracking and changing. It melts, or partially melts for a short time in the summer, allowing for boats to travel.
Animals	There are many large mammals including caribou, muskox, polar bears and wolves. There are also many marine animals such as narwhal, beluga and seals. There are freshwater fish and fish in the ocean. Small animals include foxes, rabbits and many birds.

Timeline

Visit this link to see the timeline of the Franklin expedition:

[Timeline](#)

The peoples involved in this story

Europeans

Great Britain was a very powerful country at this time in history. Their economy was booming and they had the best navy in the world. Europeans, particularly the British, relied on trading with India and China that involved a long voyage around the tip of South America. Britain sent many expeditions to create maps of the Arctic because they imagined a passage through the North would provide a faster route between Europe and Asia. Sir John Franklin and his British naval and exploration crew were experienced and famous in Britain. Their journey was featured in the British newspapers.

Inuit

The Natsilingmiut were the Inuit living in the region between north-western Hudson Bay and King William Island. They shared some elements of their culture, society and economy with other Inuit groups and populations who lived around the North pole. The Inuit spoke their own language, but they did not have books or other forms of writing at that time. They communicated using stories and songs that they practiced often. People outside the Arctic - such as Europeans - did not know much about Inuit culture, or ways of living, and Inuit did not know much about people outside their homeland.