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Frozen Secrets: Antarctica Revealed



Synopsis

Antarctica is a land of frozen secrets, with scarcely a handful that have been completely divulged. Join Sally M. Walker as she explores both historical and modern-day scientific expeditions to the continent and examines what secrets might still be locked in the continent's icy cloak secrets that might help scientists understand what the future holds for Earth and its changing climate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 5-9  All of Walker's impressive writing talents are on display in this book on the frozen continent. The author's clear and lively narrative begins with a brief history of the first explorers, including some grisly deaths, and then describes in detail the work of current researchers. Walker paints a vivid picture of the hardships and special considerations required of those who work in Antarctica. Children will almost shiver as they read the description of the scuba diver's preparations to enter an icy lake. Additionally, the author does a great job of explaining some really complex scientific activities, such as mapping the ground using ice-penetrating radar, so that readers without great knowledge of advanced science can grasp how this work is done. She also shows how Antarctic research can help them understand global climate change and other types of earth-science research. Nearly every page has sharp color photos of the continent and researchers in action or explanatory diagrams. With its superb design and Walker's gripping prose, this book will draw readers in and keep them involved.  Denise Schmidt, San Francisco Public Library

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In a wide-angle survey of our least-explored continent, the author of *Written in Bone* (2009) and other perceptive accounts of researchers in the field examines the methods and discoveries of scientists studying Antarctica—geophysics, prehistory, biota, and long- and short-range climatic variations. Heavily illustrated with maps and photos, well-supplied with lists of further resources, and detailed enough to include an entire chapter on the types, composition, and behavior of Antarctic ice, the book also distills interviews with several active scientists (including a middle-school student who designed and constructed a mobile undersea camera used to explore McMurdo Sound) into cogent explanations of why a greater knowledge of Antarctica is important to an understanding of our entire planet’s history and interconnected ecosystems. Though she makes only quick references to early Antarctic explorers and to the continent’s distinctive wildlife, Walker profiles major and ongoing research projects that enhance the recent biographies of Shackleton and his ilk and the plethora of books about penguins. Grades 6-9. --John Peters

Frozen Secrets is a bit of a style over substance book. It is lavishly illustrated, some might even say overproduced. I would have appreciated a more readable book and wish more time/money were spent on travel and original photography than design/print production! Thankfully, this book is jam packed with an organized hodgepodge of illustrated geologic and scientific information about Antarctica and the research taking place there. Much of it is informative and interesting, focusing on the science and geography of the area. My biggest disappointment was discovering on pg 98 that author Sally M. Walker hasn't been to Antarctica. That is the biggest shame of this book, because she is a good writer! Time, effort, and budget should have been made for her to at least take a tourist's cruise trip to the continent. It would have been even better if she'd been able to do an author's stay ashore. I bet the research would have been more thorough and better presented if she'd actually been able to make the trip? Perhaps then some of the problems remarked on above would evaporate as her own first-hand knowledge, photos, and experiences could have given this book more substance and authenticity. It is difficult to tell how current some of the photos are and whether they truly document the way research is conducted in Antarctica today. I wish the many photographic illustrations were captioned and dated. The ambiguity of the photo illustrations gives the book a strange feel, like stock photos that may or may not be relevant were used for eye candy, that the photographic illustrations may or many not be depicting the same time period/research effort as the surrounding text describes. Another shortcoming is that American research on the

continent is presented nearly exclusively. The reader is left with the bizarre impression that what the Americans are doing there is important and that other people did stuff there a long time ago (and might be doing stuff there now too) but that it isn't important/current like the American work. This myopic bias makes it impossible for the reader to know or appreciate how many other countries are also conducting research on Antarctica, what the focus of their research is, and whether/how it differs from the American research efforts.

We don't have enough books like this. Walker's lucid prose is used to excellent effect in *FROZEN SECRETS: ANTARCTICA REVEALED*, a mix of geology, physics, paleobiology, engineering and history. Children's science writing has an extreme bias toward biology (I am guilty of this, too). We do a half-decent job with space science and geology (thank you, astronauts and volcanoes!) but where are all the engineering books? Is there any area with such a yawning gap between importance to society and what we have to offer our children on the subject? At least now we have *FROZEN SECRETS*. Walker does a wonderful job of showing engineers applying their skills in this most forbidding of environments. One of my favorite bits concerns junior high school students constructing an underwater robot for use in Antarctica. This book is intelligent, thorough, well-designed, and engaging. I feel smarter after having read *FROZEN SECRETS*, and I wish there were more books like it to put into kids' hands.

This book has many great features including the following: Great organization: the book is easy to follow with a logical beginning with the race to the South Pole and the first discoveries to the implications of global warming in Antarctica and the possible repercussions world wide. Great maps, as the author discusses various different expeditions and scientific studies going on across the continent, the maps help the reader visualize the different locations. (I like being able to put places and locations together.) Great design: the design is attractive and appealing. Awesome photographs that give the reader a glimpse into a harsh, but fascinating place and the price paid by those who choose to study there. The amount of text and technical nature of the writing make this book most suitable for secondary students, although I plan to use some of the photographs to help my elementary students develop a better appreciation for our planet's often ignored seventh continent.

This book is written for older grades, packed with text and beautiful photographs (although not necessarily RECENT photographs). It says too much without teaching enough. It's almost a trivia

dump... I don't know how to explain it best. The information is not very well organized. (Much like this review, I'm sorry to say.) The information on the plant and animal fossils being found on Antarctica is quite interesting. The information on ice cores and soil cores is well presented and illustrated. This was the best part of the book. I was interested to read that ice cores show Earth to be a planet with a stable cooling-warming pattern over the past 800,000 years. In 2012, we are in the warming part of the cycle. That is good information. If you have a child who is interested in the jobs scientists do, this is a good choice. For that specific kind of kid, I would also recommend: *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland (Exceptional Social Studies Titles [Library Binding])* *How the Dinosaur Got to the Museum* (picture book)

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