

Arctic Clues Remain

Trace facts, inferences, and unanswered questions in a historical investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 "Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that state facts about the expedition, circle words or phrases that limit what the evidence proves, and number three details you could cite to support an inference.

The Franklin Expedition

- ① In 1845, British naval officer Sir John Franklin sailed from England aboard HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. The expedition hoped to complete the Northwest Passage, a sea route through the Canadian Arctic. European whalers last saw the ships near Greenland in July 1845. No crew member returned. Searchers later found a note at Victory Point on King William Island. It states that Franklin died on June 11, 1847, and that the surviving crew left the icebound ships on April 22, 1848.
- ② The note names Back's Fish River as the crew's intended destination, but it does not establish how far they later traveled or explain each decision. During the 1860s, American explorer Charles Francis Hall recorded Inuit testimony about qallunaat, or outsiders, traveling south and pulling a boat across the ice. Some witnesses described hungry men and a large group that later died near the mainland. Decades afterward, investigators found scattered artifacts and human remains in the region. Cut marks on some bones provide evidence that some survivors may have processed human bodies for food. Yet the accounts were recorded years after the events, and the remains cannot identify every person or reconstruct each decision.

- ③ Modern searches located Erebus in 2014 and Terror in 2016, near King William Island. Underwater images show that Terror rests upright in a sheltered bay, while Erebus lies in shallower water and is more damaged. These discoveries confirm that the ships ended in different places, although they do not reveal when or why they separated. Archaeologists have recovered objects from Erebus, including personal items and equipment. The wrecks add physical evidence, but their positions alone cannot supply a complete timeline of the crew's later movements. The expedition's final months therefore remain partly uncertain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 What two facts does the Victory Point note explicitly report? Cite both details from paragraph 1.

- 2 What reasonable inference can you make about the conditions facing the crew after they left the ships? Support your inference with two details from the passage.

- 3 Which claim about the survivors is supported by physical evidence but still needs careful wording? Explain what the evidence proves and what it cannot prove.

- 4 Identify one matter that remains uncertain about the expedition. Cite evidence that explains why the passage cannot settle that question.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write exactly four sentences that explain what the evidence suggests happened after Franklin's death. Cite at least three details from the passage, include one explicit fact, one reasonable inference, and one uncertainty that the evidence cannot resolve.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that state facts about the expedition, circle words or phrases that limit what the evidence proves, and number three details you could cite to support an inference. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two facts does the Victory Point note explicitly report? Cite both details from paragraph 1.	It reports that Franklin died on June 11, 1847, and that the surviving crew left the icebound ships on April 22, 1848.
2	What reasonable inference can you make about the conditions facing the crew after they left the ships? Support your inference with two details from the passage.	The crew likely faced a desperate survival crisis. The ships were icebound, and Inuit witnesses described hungry men traveling south; the passage also says that many later died near the mainland.
3	Which claim about the survivors is supported by physical evidence but still needs careful wording? Explain what the evidence proves and what it cannot prove.	Cut marks on bones support the claim that some survivors may have processed human bodies for food. The remains cannot identify every person or explain each person's actions.
4	Identify one matter that remains uncertain about the expedition. Cite evidence that explains why the passage cannot settle that question.	The crew's later route remains uncertain. The note names Back's Fish River as their intended destination, but it does not establish how far they traveled. The timing and reason for the ships' separation also remain uncertain because the wrecks' locations do not supply a complete timeline.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After Franklin died, the surviving crew abandoned the icebound ships in April 1848, according to the Victory Point note in paragraph 1. Their decision likely reflected a crisis because Inuit witnesses described hungry men traveling south and later dying near the mainland in paragraph 2. Cut marks on bones further suggest that at least some survivors faced extreme shortages, although they cannot explain every individual's actions. The note names Back's Fish River as their goal, but it does not establish how far they traveled or why the ships ended in different places.

Accept reasonable inferences that are supported by specific passage details and clearly identified as inferences rather than facts. Students should name a genuine uncertainty and explain why the available evidence does not resolve it. Historical reference: Parks Canada, Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site of Canada.