



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Keep On! The Story of Matthew Henson, Co-Discoverer of the North Pole

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading
Trek Map

Ages: 6–10

Grades: 1–4 (read-aloud), 5
(independent reading)

Reading Level: 5th grade

Lexile Measure: AD1080L

Guided Reading Level: S

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 40

Content Areas: Reading,
literature, and social studies
(including history and geography).

Synopsis of Book

Shortly after the American Civil War, opportunities for African Americans were extremely limited. But Matthew Henson dreamed of adventure, and a chance meeting with Admiral Robert Peary led to the adventure of a lifetime: an expedition to the North Pole as Peary's assistant. Cultural prejudices of the era kept Henson's name and accomplishments out of the media and history books, but Deborah Hopkinson brings his story to life.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Reading: Informational Text

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- RESPONDING

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting the layers for the author, Deborah Hopkinson, and the illustrator, Stephen Alcorn.
2. View “[Henson and Peary | PBS World Explorers](#)” (5 minutes).
3. View “The Sled Dogs of the Arctic Circle” (7 minutes) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Construct a virtual timeline using Sutori ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Read the review for more ideas for using this free tool.
5. Research and create a Then and Now chart or Venn diagram to compare and contrast sea travel for merchant ships. If you would like your students to develop the chart or Venn diagram online, Canva’s Venn Diagram Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) is a good tool for all ages. If you’re working with young students, you may want to use Class Tools’s 2- and 3-Circle Interactive Venn Diagrams ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
6. Trace Matthew Henson’s path from the US to the Arctic and label important stops on the map along the way. Be sure to include Maryland, Greenland, the North Pole, and Washington, D.C. Use this activity to spark discussion about how travel has changed in the last 100 years.

7. Identify major geographic features of the Arctic region on a map. Label the following: the Arctic Circle, Greenland, Baffin Bay, Ellesmere Island, and the North Pole. Add things like ice sheets, glaciers, and pack ice zones.
8. Learn about longitude and latitude and how explorers use these to locate places. If your students are unfamiliar with longitude and latitude, share [this video](#). Find the coordinates of the North Pole, your school, and other well-known locations and practice plotting coordinates on a map.
9. Compare maps of the arctic region from the 1890s and today. Create a comparison template using Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)), then use it to compare features of the sea ice extent, country borders, routes of exploration, and other significant data. Discuss how climate change is affecting the landscape in the Arctic region.

Extension Activities:

1. Use the Reading Trek map to stimulate discussion, ask questions, or inspire writing prompts about traveling across the United States. Use a simple collaboration tool to share students' responses, such as Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Students can respond in writing or by using audio or video.
2. Create a packing list of personal items an explorer might need or want for a transatlantic sail during the late 1800s, as well as a packing list of everyday items for a cabin boy or girl.
3. Visit [Ducksters Native Americans](#) to learn more about the Inuit people. The site also includes a ten-question quiz.
4. Have students create a book trailer for the story using Adobe Express Video Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or Animoto ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Create a collection of short stories of personal perseverance. Students can think of people they know in their personal lives or research individuals who have overcome obstacles.
6. Make a character trait chart for Matthew Henson. ReadWriteThink has a character map in their Story Map resource ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Ask students to include examples from the book to show how to use the text as evidence that he possessed each trait.
7. Write a first-person journal entry from the North Pole as Matthew Henson. Include what he sees, hears, feels, and thinks. Students can tell their story orally or in writing using WriteReader ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
8. Using a medium available to students, create a piece of visual art that depicts Henson at the North Pole.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [Deborah Hopkinson—Author and Speaker](#)
- [The Alcorn Studio and Gallery](#)
- Book trailer examples: [Kid Lit TV's Book Trailer Archives](#) or [Slime Kids](#).