

## Social Studies

### Genre

**Nonfiction Articles** present facts about real people, living things, places, situations, or events.

### Text Features

A **Primary Source** is information that comes from the time being studied.

**Journals** and **Letters** are two types of primary sources.

Journals provide daily records written by a person for his or her own use. Letters are a way for people to share information with others through writing.

### Content Vocabulary

**continent**

**volume**

**observations**

# THE Bottom OF THE World

by Mary Ann Williams

**L**t may be hard to believe that any part of today's Earth has gone unexplored. People have traveled to almost all of nature's mysterious places. However, the **continent** of Antarctica has held onto many of its secrets.

One reason people have stayed away is the continent's harsh environment. A huge obstacle for explorers is the ice that surrounds the continent. Even during the summers, 95 percent of Antarctica is covered with ice. In addition to ice, it is surrounded by dangerous waters that are hard to navigate. This might explain why centuries went by before explorers, who traveled by ship, were able to reach the unknown continent.

People must also overcome Antarctica's intense weather. During the winter Antarctica remains dark and cold around the clock. The inner part of the continent is the coldest place on Earth with temperatures below  $-126^{\circ}\text{F}$ . High winds blow almost continuously and blizzards are frequent. Blowing snow sometimes combines with low clouds to create "whiteouts." During a whiteout, the sky and the ground blur together and people cannot tell which way is up. Despite all these obstacles, countries have now established permanent scientific stations where scientists live and work on the continent. Slowly, the last secrets of Antarctica are being revealed.

Modern-day adventurer Jennifer Owings Dewey is one person trying to solve some of Antarctica's mysteries. She went to Antarctica for four months. During her

trip she kept a journal, a daily record of **observations** and events. Most people keep journals as a way to remember the details of their daily lives.



### Journal Entries

Here are two entries from Dewey's journal. Notice that journal entries are dated and written from a first-person point of view.

#### November 12

*For millions of years Antarctica, the fifth largest continent, has been in the grip of an ice age. It is the windiest, coldest, most forbidding region on earth, and I am heading straight for it.*

*"Goodbye, America," I whisper as the airplane heaves off the ground with a shuddering roar. "See you later."*

#### November 24th Palmer Station Antarctica

- *is five and a quarter million square miles; it's larger than Europe.*
- *has no native human population.*
- *contains two thirds of the planet's fresh water in the form of glaciers.*
- *receives less than two inches of snow or rain in a year (precipitation at the South Pole is barely measurable).*
- *has no land-based predators (other than humans).*
- *has one hundred million penguins in residence.*
- *is a world park, a continent devoted to science, a vast outdoor laboratory.*
- *has freezing temperatures that keep anything from rotting, even old shacks built by early explorers.*
- *has ice up to three miles thick, covering ninety-eight percent of the land; in winter the **volume** of ice doubles along the edge of the continent.*
- *has bedrock that is depressed two to three thousand feet by the weight of the ice.*
- *has only one mammal, the Weddell seal (named for an early explorer), that lives there all year long.*
- *has only two flowering plants: Antarctic hair grass (*Deschampsia antarctica*) and Antarctic pearlwort (*Colobenthos subulatus*).*



## Letters

Letters are another way for a person to share experiences and feelings. Here is part of a letter that Dewey wrote home just after she arrived in Antarctica.

### **November 18th Palmer Station**

Dear T.,

*Palmer Station is a group of insulated metal buildings, housing fifty people comfortably. The station was built on Anvers Island. You don't know you're on an island because permanent ice fills the gap between Anvers and the mainland.*

*We learn the rules the first night: no travel alone, except to climb the glacier behind Palmer, flagged with poles to show the safest way up. We sign out when leaving, giving a departure hour and an estimated time of return. We are given walkie-talkies and check with "base" every hour. If we're half an hour off schedule, someone comes looking, unless a storm blows in. If it's too dangerous for anyone to come after us, we are expected to wait out the bad weather.*

*The sunscreen they pass out is "the only kind strong enough."*

*We are ordered never to forget to use it.*

*Tomorrow we learn about the zodiacs, small rubber boats with outboard motors. I'm excited about what comes next, and sleepy.*

*Much love,*

*Mom*



Young Weddell seal sunning on the beach



Gentoo parent feeding chicks



## Connect and Compare



1. Think about the experiences Dewey recorded. What is the value of keeping a journal? **Reading a Journal**
2. If you had the opportunity, would you choose to travel to Antarctica? Support your answer with information from the article. **Evaluate**
3. Think about *Spirit of Endurance* and this article about a modern-day trip to Antarctica. How are the two trips alike, and how are they different? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



## Geography Activity

Research another explorer of Antarctica. Mark the route of the explorer's journey on a map of Antarctica.



Find out more about Antarctica at [www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

## Writer's Craft

### Beginning, Middle, and End

Writers use a good **beginning, middle, and end** so readers can follow the points being made. For a speech of introduction, choose facts that will grab the reader's attention at the beginning and hold it until the end.

# Write an Introduction Speech

## Introducing Dr. Robert Ballard

by Whitney O.

I included interesting points about Dr. Robert Ballard in my speech.

I ended by welcoming Dr. Ballard.

I am honored to introduce our guest today, Dr. Robert Ballard. He explores the deep seas. You might know him from one of his most famous discoveries, the wreck of the R.M.S. Titanic. Dr. Ballard has been on more than 100 deep-sea expeditions and has made countless other discoveries.

At the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, Dr. Ballard and his team found an amazing, ancient fleet of Roman ships from the first century B.C. He also discovered volcanoes under the sea near California. Because they are so hot, he named them black smokers.

Dr. Ballard reminds people that explorers are still important in today's world. Join me in welcoming our country's most passionate oceanographer.

## Your Turn

What famous person would you invite to your school? Choose someone whom you admire. Then prepare a speech to introduce this person to your fellow students. Remember to write a good beginning, middle, and end when you are describing this person and his or her accomplishments. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



## Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I choose a person whom I truly admire?
- Organization:** Does my speech build in energy, with a good **beginning, middle, and end**?
- Voice:** Can the reader tell how much I admire this person?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose the most precise adjectives possible?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I use a variety of sentence types?
- Conventions:** Did I capitalize all proper nouns and adjectives? Did I proofread for spelling errors?