

The man who ate his boots is a fascinating account of expeditions that went wrong. The book tells the story of the nineteenth century British search for a route to Asia via the Arctic (the Northwest Passage). Author Anthony Brandt describes many attempts by both land and sea that ended in failure and tragedy, including the 1845 expedition led by Sir John Franklin. Brandt shows how these brave, yet sometimes foolish, British explorers would have avoided starvation, frostbite and even death if they'd copied the survival techniques of the local Inuit people. Some of the more surprising details the book reveals include:

READ THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE BOOK REVIEW. FIND THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

1. The reason for the British expeditions.
2. What happened to the expeditions at the end.
3. Two words to describe the British explorers.

Tents

The British had seen how the Inuit built igloos, but they still used tents. Tents freeze in sub-zero temperatures and don't keep the people inside them warm. If the British had built igloos, they would have been warm even in the worst Arctic weather.

Clothing

Frostbite was common among the British but rare among the Inuit. If the explorers had worn sealskin and furs like the Inuit, they wouldn't have suffered from frostbite.

Dog teams

Why didn't the British use dog teams to pull their sledges? British explorers pulled their sledges themselves right into the early twentieth century. It cost Scott and his men their lives on their return from the South Pole in 1912.

Salad

The British did get something right, however, when Captain Edward Parry grew salad vegetables in boxes on board his ship. It was known that fresh vegetables and fresh meat prevented scurvy, although at that time the reason for this – not enough vitamin C – hadn't been discovered. Parry's men wouldn't have stayed healthy if they hadn't eaten the salads.

frostbite (n) /'frɒs(t)baɪt/ severe damage to the body caused by freezing conditions, usually affecting toes and fingers

scurvy (n) /'skɜːvi/ an illness affecting the mouth and teeth caused by lack of vitamin C

sledge (n) /sledʒ/ a wooden object for transporting people and things across snow

starvation (n) /stɑː'veɪʃən/ death or loss of strength caused by not eating

AFTER HAVING READ THE WHOLE REVIEW. ARE THESE SENTENCES TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The British explorers learned a lot from the local Inuit people they met.
2. Tents were an appropriate type of shelter for Arctic conditions.
3. The British wore adequate clothing for the weather in the Arctic.
4. The British pulled their own sledges rather than use dog teams.
5. The British had no supply of vitamin C to treat scurvy

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TITLE OF THE BOOK REFERS TO?