

# POLAR PURPOSE

Read the text and do the multiple choice.

In 1997, a group of twenty British women made history. Working in two teams with four women in each team, they walked to the North Pole. Apart from one experienced female guide, the other women were all ordinary people who had never done anything like this in their lives before. They managed to survive in an environment which had defeated several very experienced men during the same few spring months of that year. Who were these women and how did they succeed where others failed?

In the summer of 1995, an advertisement was put in several British newspapers: "Adventurers are being sought for the formation of an all-woman team to talk to the North Pole. Applications are invited from women of any age, background and occupation who are willing to put up with real pain and discomfort to achieve an important goal."

Nearly one hundred women took part in the first selection weekend and then, after several training expeditions designed to weed out unsuitable applicants, twenty women were chosen. The youngest of these was twenty-one and the oldest fifty-one. In the group there was a mother of triplets, a teacher, a flight attendant, a policeman and even a film producer.

They were a very mixed bunch but they all really wanted to take part in the venture and make it a success. Each of the women agreed to raise the £2500 needed for expenses and the airfare to Canada, where the expedition began. They also committed themselves to following an intensive physical training program before leaving the UK so that they were fit enough to take part in the expedition without endangering their own or others' lives.

The women set off as soon as they were ready. Once on the ice, each woman had to ski

along while dragging a sledge weighing over 50 kilos. This would not have been too bad on a smooth surface, but for long stretches, the Arctic ice is pushed up into huge mounds two or three meters high and the sledges had to be hauled up one side and carefully let down the other so that they didn't smash. The temperature was always below freezing point and sometimes strong winds made walking while pulling so much weight almost impossible. It was also very difficult to put up their tents when they stopped at night.

In such conditions the women were making good progress if they covered fourteen or fifteen kilometers a day. But there was another problem. Part of the journey was across a frozen sea with moving water underneath the ice and at some points the team would drift back more than five kilometers during the night. That meant that after walking in these very harsh conditions for ten hours on one day, they had to spend part of the next day covering the same ground again. Furthermore, each day it would take three hours from waking up to setting off and another three hours every evening to set up the camp and prepare the evening meal.

So, how did they manage to succeed? They realized that they were part of a team. If any one of them didn't pull her sledge or get her job done, she would be jeopardizing the success of the whole expedition. Any form of selfishness could result in the efforts of everyone else being completely wasted, so personal feelings had to be put to one side. At the end of their journey, the women agreed that it was mental effort far more than physical fitness that got them to the North Pole.



**1 What was so extraordinary about the expedition?**

- A There was no one to lead it.
- B The women did not have any men with them.
- C It was a new experience for most of the women.
- D The women had not met one another before.



**2 Why were the women who took part in the expedition chosen?**

- A They were the only ones who answered the advertisement.
- B They had done a weekend training course.
- C They were still in the group faster others had been eliminated.
- D They came from very diverse backgrounds.

**3 What did the women who answered the advertisement have in common?**

- A They were about the same age.
- B They had all suffered pain and discomfort.
- C They all had plenty of money.
- D They all wanted to achieve a goal.

**4 What does "these" refer to in paragraph 3?**

- A all the applicants
- B the training expeditions
- C the women who went on the trip
- D the unsuitable applicants.

**5 What did each woman have to do before the start of the expedition?**

- A visit Canada
- B get fit
- C learn to ski
- D meet the other women.

**6 On the expedition, the women had to be careful to avoid**

- A falling over on the ice.
- B being left behind.
- C damaging the sledges.
- D getting too cold at night.

**7 It was difficult for the women to cover 15 kilometers a day because**

- A they got too tired.
- B the ice was moving.
- C they kept getting hot.
- D the temperatures were too low.

**8 What is the main message of the text?**

- A Motivation and teamwork achieve goals.
- B Women can do anything they want.
- C It is sometimes good to experience difficult conditions.
- D Arctic conditions are very harsh.

