

Keep On!

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

Written by Deborah Hopkinson and
illustrated by Stephen Alcorn

ISBN: 978-1-56145-473-0 | HC | \$17.95
Ages 6 – 10 | Biography | Nonfiction

Book Level Scores

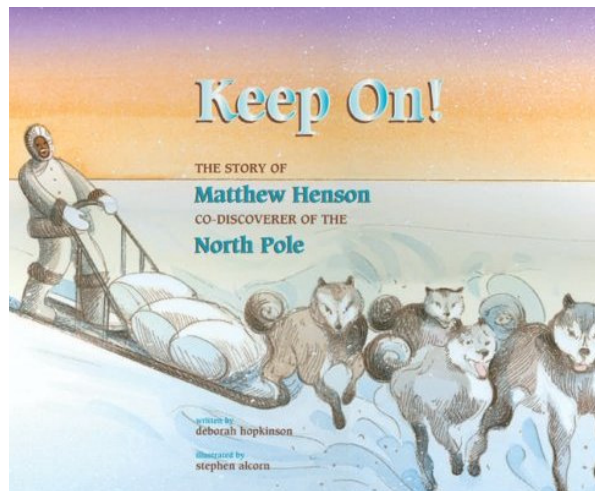
Accelerated Reader | Level 3.2 | Quiz #: 130592
Reading Counts | Reading Level: 9.2 | Points: 2
Fountas & Pinnell | Level: M | Grade Level: 2-3

ABOUT THE BOOK

Many know the story of Robert Peary's great 1909 expedition to reach the North Pole. Yet, few people know that Peary was joined on this grueling, history-making journey by fellow explorer Matthew Henson. Henson, an African American, was born just after the Civil War, a time when slavery had been abolished, but few opportunities existed for black people. His greatest adventure began when he accepted an invitation from Peary to join his expedition to the North Pole. The team endured storms, shifting ice, wind, injuries, accidents, and unimaginable cold. Finally on April 1, Peary, Henson, and four Inuit men began the final 133-mile push to the Pole. Readers will share in the excitement and drama of this remarkable adventure as award-winning author Deborah Hopkinson pays tribute to a great but under-recognized figure from America's past. Illustrator Stephen Alcorn's large-format, stylized ink-and-watercolor illustrations capture all the action. Excerpts from Henson's expedition diaries, a time line, and an epilogue place the story in its historical context.

THEMES

- Black History Month
- North Pole
- Great Explorers
- Inuit People
- Goal Setting & Determination
- Snow
- Arctic
- Diversity
- Inuit Dogs



REVIEWS

"...sturdy prose...stylized illustrations range from images of classic Americana to organic figures in motion..."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"...strikingly illustrated...articulate and straightforward prose..."

—*School Library Journal*

"Henson's story is dramatic, although the narrative voice is soft as velvet, while Stephen Alcorn's artwork appears both washed in bitter cold and defrosted by its hand-tinted quality." —*Kirkus*

AWARDS

- 📖 Oregon Book Awards (children's picture book winner) —*Literary Arts 2009*
- 📖 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People —*NCSS/CBC 2010*
- 📖 Kansas State Reading Circle Recommended Reading List (intermediate) —*Kansas National Education Association 2010*

NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS*

*Standards are labeled after activity.

LANGUAGE ARTS (K – 12)

[English Language Arts Standards provided by the NCTE.]

NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.9 MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

MATH (K – 12)

[National Mathematics Standards provided by the NCTM.]

NM-PROB.PK-12.3 Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems.

SCIENCE (K - 4)

[National Science Education Standards provided by the National Academies of Science.]

NS.K-4.7 HISTORY OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

As a result of activities in grades K-4, all students should develop understanding of Science as a human endeavor.

SOCIAL SCIENCES: Geography (K - 12) | U.S. History (K-4)

[National Geography Standards provided by the National Geographic Society and the National U.S. History Standards provided by the National Center for History in the Schools.]

NSS-G.K-12.1 THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Understand how to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. Understand how to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

NSS-USH.K-4.4 THE HISTORY OF PEOPLES OF MANY CULTURES AROUND THE WORLD

Understand selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe.

Understand major discoveries in science and technology, some of their social and economic effects, and the major scientists and inventors responsible for them.

TECHNOLOGY (K - 12)

[National Technology Standards provided by the International Society for Technology in Education.]

NT.K-12.5 TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH TOOLS

Use technology to locate, evaluate and collect information from a variety of sources.

Use technology tools to process data and report results.

Evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks.

BEFORE YOU READ

1. Discuss with students several famous African Americans and what they are known for. (Ex. Oprah Winfrey, Dr. Martin Luther King, Dr. Charles Drew, Ida B. Wells, Carter G. Woodson, etc.)
2. Let students know the importance of learning about people who have made contributions to advance society and who should be recognized for their efforts and accomplishments.
3. Ask students if they know who Matthew Henson is.
4. Discuss various ways that African Americans were not always treated fairly in the United States, and point out how many, at the time Henson was alive, were never given credit for their efforts, achievements, contributions, or discoveries.
5. Talk about efforts that have been made to rectify this injustice. One example: Black History Month began in the United

States to recognize contributions made by people with African heritage.

6. Have students think about ways a person like Matthew Henson might have contributed to American society.

AS YOU READ

Note: Point out that all the quotations in the book are from Henson's own writings.

Read the book aloud to the class straight through to create and hold the students' interest and to promote a love of reading. Then, read the book a second time, stopping to allow students to point out parts of the story that interested them or raised questions in their minds. Next, discuss and answer questions. All questions that cannot be answered during the discussion can be written down on chart paper and used later as part of the learning activities in this guide.

AFTER YOU READ

1. Why was Matthew Henson not originally given credit for being co-discoverer of the North Pole?
2. What skills and talents did Matthew learn throughout his lifetime to prepare for his journey to the North Pole?
3. What kind of personality do you think Matthew Henson had based on the information you read about his life?
4. What year was Matthew Henson born and in which state?
5. What kind of dogs was used for the expedition? (Answer: Inuit Dogs)
6. Why do you think Matthew always followed his dreams despite the hardships he faced as a child and as an adult? What message do you get from Matthew Henson's life?
7. As a young boy, how did Matthew survive? How would you describe his attitude? (Possible responses: very smart, quick learner, resourceful, go getter, tenacious, friendly, steadfast, open to trying new things, etc.) What could you learn from having this kind of attitude?
8. How many years has it been since the Henson/Peary group discovered the North Pole?

9. If Henson were alive today how old would he be?

BACKGROUND FOR THE TEACHER

Inuit People

Some call them the Inuit Indians or the Inuit tribe and even more commonly, Eskimos; however these are not correct names for these kind and gentle people. Inuit simply means “The People” in *Inuktitut*, the language of the Inuit. Inuit is the name they wish to be known by. Inuit replaces “Eskimo” a term based on an Algonkian word meaning “eaters of raw flesh.” The Inuit people are the most widely dispersed group in the world still leading a partly aboriginal way of life. They live in a region that spans more than 3,500 miles. This region includes Greenland, the northern fringe of North America, as well as a sector of eastern Siberia. Inuits are not related to the North American Indians, but are closely related to the Mongolian peoples of eastern Asia. They have never possessed a national or well-defined tribal sense, and have always associated with local and family groups rather than with tribes based on land and territory as in the Native American culture. The Inuits are hard-working people who believe in giving their children a good education and teaching them their way of life in order to keep their culture alive. There are three distinct “aboriginal” or “native” groups in Canada—North American Indians (population: 554,290); Métis (population: 210,190); and Inuit (population: 41,080)*. They are skilled as artists, particularly as stone carvers, printmakers and jewelry makers. Today, the Inuit support themselves primarily through the sale of their art.

(*Source: 1996 Census of Canada)

(**Source #1)

Canadian Inuit (Eskimo) Dog

(*Qimmiq* is Inuit for “dog.”)



Canadian Inuit Dogs are known to have resided in the Arctic for the last 4000 years. They are related to the Greenland dog and were used by the Inuit people for hunting and hauling supplies and people. In the 1800s and early

1900s this breed was in demand for polar expeditions, but began to decline in numbers after the snowmobile was invented. These dogs were heading towards extinction in the mid-1900s, until the Eskimo Dog Research Foundation (EDRF) began breeding them in 1972 to increase their numbers. They are still very rare. However, they are becoming more popular in Arctic tourism, with an increasing number of sled dog teams that entertain tourists. On May 1st, 2000, the Canadian territory of Nunavut officially adopted the "Canadian Inuit Dog" as the animal symbol of this territory.

Physical Characteristics and Attributes:

Canadian Inuit Dogs are powerfully built, and they have very thick and dense coats and even thicker fur around its neck. They come in a variety of colors, from solid black, white, brown, or a combination of these colors. Many of the solid-colored dogs have white mask-like markings on their faces, sometimes including spots over their eyes. Others might have white socks and nose stripes with no eye spots. Males are a little larger (23 – 28 inches) than females (19 ½ - 23 ½ inches), and weigh a little more than they do, too. Males weigh approximately 66 – 88 pounds and females 40 – 66 pounds. These dogs are loyal, tough, brave, intelligent, protective, alert, affectionate, and gentle; they develop close bonds with their owners. When used as sled dogs, they are often required to forage and hunt for their own food. These very vocal dogs enjoy the cold weather, often preferring to sleep outside. These dogs need a large amount of exercise and are very trainable and submissive. (Source #2)

Maps of Ellesmere Island and Cape Columbia:

Matthew Henson and Robert Peary began their voyage to the North Pole on Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada on March 1, 1909. Ellesmere Island is part of the Queen Elizabeth Islands and is located on top of the world. It is the third largest island in Canada and the tenth largest island in the world. It is filled with gigantic boulder-shaped glaciers, ice fields, and rugged mountains. In the summer, the sun shines 24 hours a day but the temperature rarely rises above 45° F. During the winter, for five months the sun never shines and temperatures can fall to -

50°F. Cape Columbia, the northernmost point of land in Canada and located in Ellesmere Island, is approximately 413 miles from the North Pole. The first inhabitants, the Inuit People, started arriving 4000 years ago. This island boasts the two northernmost permanent settlements in the world. Ellesmere Island is located in the Qikiqtaaluk Region of the Canadian territory of Nunavut and has three settlements—Eureka, Alert, and Grise Fjord. At any given time the total population of this large island is less than 200 inhabitants. The island receives very little rain during the year (about 2.5 inches) so the land stays dry the majority of the time, making it a polar desert. Both glaciers and ice dominate much of Ellesmere Island and at one time, the entire northwest coast of Ellesmere Island was one large sheet of ice. Today, this ice sheet has lost 90 percent of its total mass due to global warming and is no longer a single giant sheet of ice, but is now five separate, and still shrinking, ice shelves. (Source #3)



(Source #3)



(Source #4)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

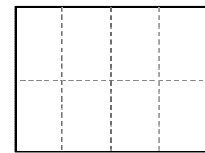
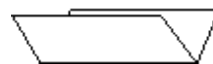
LANGUAGE ARTS

1) **Journal Writing** – During the week have students imagine they are traveling to the North Pole with Henson, Peary, and the four Inuit men. Have them record their thoughts and experiences during their exploration. (NL-ENG.K-12.9)

2) **Vocabulary Words** –

explore	trudging	screched
keen	eager	pounce
vessel	navigate	assistant
haul	harsh	unrelenting
Inuit	halt	expedition
aim	cache	assault
limp	haze	grueling

These words can be used for the week’s new vocabulary or for bonus spelling words. Give each student a blank sheet of copy paper. Have them fold the sheet in half along the long side. Next, fold again along the short side. Last, fold the paper in half one more time along the short side. When the page is unfolded, there should be eight equal rectangles like the page shown below. Have students choose eight vocabulary words and write the word and its definition in each rectangle. On the back of that rectangle space, have them draw a picture illustrating the word.



Page should be rotated.

Word and definition (front side), Picture (on back)

3) **Creative Writing** – Remind students that Matthew started living on his own at a very early age. Have them image being on their own at thirteen years old without any family members. Include the following: How would you survive, where would you go, what would you do, how would you earn money to stay alive? (NL-ENG.K-12.9)

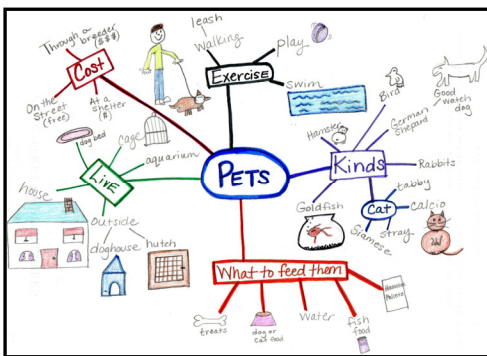
4) **Creative Writing** – Create a chart with Matthew Henson’s picture on it. Ask students to write down, on notebook paper, their thoughts on why Matthew Henson is an American hero. While they are writing, have them think about the following: Who he is, what he accomplished, his childhood, ways he

reached for his dreams. Also have them include what they personally learned from him and how they can use this knowledge in their own lives. **(NL-ENG.K-12.9)**

5) **Action Verbs** – Review action verbs. (An action verb expresses action and describes something a person, animal, force of nature or thing can do.) Read the story, *Keep On!* and have students raise their hands when they hear an action verb in the story. For older students, as you read the book have them write down all the words they think are action verbs. Afterwards discuss their choices.

(NL-ENG.K-12.9)

6) **Creating a Mind Map** – A mind map is a diagram used to represent a topic or subject of study using words, pictures, shapes, symbols,



letters, drawings, and different colors to clarify the topic or main idea. The topic is written at the

center of the page and all the supporting information is designed and written around it in sub-topics. Mind maps are used to visualize, organize, and generate ideas and to problem-solve through pictures, words, and symbols. Have students create a mind map of their dream job or dream life. Include the following information: What is your dream job/life? What do you need to learn and do to prepare for accomplishing this dream/these dreams?

7) **100th Anniversary** – Review with students the date when the men reached the North Pole. (Answer: April 6, 1909) Discuss ways things have changed since then. Points of Discussion: Then & Now—Treatment of African Americans, technology and transportation (mention Inuit Dogs vs. snowmobiles), etc. Give each student a sheet of construction paper and have them fold their paper in half. At the top of the page have students write “100th Anniversary of Reaching the North Pole (1909 – 2009).” Under this heading, in the first column, have them write “100 Years Ago” and on the other side write

“Today.” Then, have the students draw and write information about what they would have seen 100 years ago versus what they see today.

(NL-ENG.K-12.9)

SOCIAL STUDIES

1) **Using a Map** – Track the voyage. Have students research the location of the North Pole and recreate the trail the men took to get there on a map. See “Helpful Websites” at the end of this teacher’s guide to view maps outlining the expedition to the North Pole. **(NSS-G.K-12.1 and NM-PROB.PK-12.3)**

2) **Ellesmere Island** – Print out a map of Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada and read the information from “Background for the Teacher, Maps of Ellesmere Island and Cape Columbia.” Before reading this information, have students copy the following questions from the board and answer them, then discuss them. **(NSS-USH.K-4.4)**

Questions:

1. From which Canadian country and island did the men begin their voyage by foot to the North Pole? **(answer: Ellesmere Island)**
2. Which ocean did they walk across to get to the North Pole? **(answer: The Arctic Ocean)**
3. Is the North Pole surrounded by land or water? **(answer: frozen water)**
4. What is Canada’s most northerly point of land and the location where the team of explorers began their voyage by foot? **(answer: Cape Columbia)**
5. What was the name of the ship used to begin the expedition? **(answer: the Roosevelt)**
6. What are the average temperatures in the summer and winter months? **(answers: summer, 45°F/winter -50°F)**
7. Describe the summer and winter months on the island. **(answers: In the summer the sun shines 24 hours a day and in the winter, for 5 months, the sun never shines.)**
8. How far is the North Pole from Cape Columbia? **(answer: approx. 497 miles)**
9. Who were the first people to inhabit the land? **(answer: The Inuit)**

3) **Flags** – What do they represent? Reread the section in the book about placing the flag on the North Pole. Briefly discuss the importance of what this act represents. Also, mention other monumental events where flags are used to represent events in time. (Ex: moon

landing, the flag on Iwo Jima, etc.) Have students think about a heroic act they have seen or would like to do themselves where afterwards the need for placing a flag would be necessary. Have them write about this experience and create a flag to represent this event.

4) **Research –Keep On!** mentions that Matthew Henson lived with the Inuit people for many years and learned their language and way of life. He also worked with their dogs. Have students research the Inuit people and Inuit dogs and then have them create posters with this information. They should include the following information and draw and/or print pictures to include on their poster. Inuit people: Where do they live, how do they dress, what do they live in, what do they eat, how do they survive in a place so cold? Inuit Dogs: What were they used for and what were their physical characteristics and attributes. Why would this breed be helpful on the voyage to the North Pole? **(NSS-USH.K-4.4 and NL-ENG.K-12.8)**

5) **Timeline** – Discuss the timeline at the back of the book with the students. Have them create their own personal timelines. Allow them to create a timeline past their current age and into their future by including information from birth through adulthood. Let them know they need to include future goals they want to accomplish. They can use real pictures of themselves as babies, magazine pictures of items, and drawings.

SCIENCE

1) **Global warming** – Have students research the effects of global warming on Ellesmere Island and write a paper about it. Also have them include inventive ways to solve this problem. **(NT.K-12.5)**

2) **Arctic Animals and Plants** – Have students research animals and plants that live in the Arctic and allow them to choose which kind of living organism they want to research and learn more about. Students can work in pairs or small groups. They should include at least five interesting facts and several pictures. Once they complete this project, allow them to share their charts with the entire class. **(NT.K-12.5)**

ART

1) **Quotation Art** – Briefly discuss what quotation marks are. (Quotation marks, sometimes called speech marks, are punctuation marks used in pairs (“ ”) to set off speech, a quotation, a phrase or a word; and consists of an opening and closing quotation mark.) Have students choose their favorite quotation from the book *Keep On!* and write it down neatly and artistically on construction paper. Then have them interpret this quote through their drawings or using pictures from magazines. Afterwards read the story again and have the students go to the front of the room with their artwork when their quote is mentioned in the book. **(NL-ENG.K-12.9)**

2) **Portrait of Matthew Henson:**
Items needed:

- Construction paper
- cotton balls
- drawing instruments

Use the photos of Matthew Henson on websites: matthewhenson.com/loc.htm or matthewhenson.com/journalists.htm.

Teachers: Either make a copy of one of the photos for each student or have students draw Matthew Henson’s portrait on construction paper. Next, have students use cotton balls to represent Matthew’s coat and hood and draw a snow scene in the background. On notebook paper, have students write about several things they learned about Matthew Henson from the book, *Keep On!* Also, have them write a few sentences about what Matthew Henson may have been thinking when these pictures were taken. Afterwards have them paste their information at the bottom of the picture and hang them up in the classroom or in the hallway. **(NL-ENG.K-12.9)**

Inuit Children’s Game (called: Tingmiujang)



Use clay to make pieces for this game Inuit children play to help pass the long, cold winters of the Arctic.

Items needed:

- Air-dry paper clay
- Scissors
- Large piece of brown craft paper or vinyl

Use the clay to make 15 birds, about 1 inch long, in the shape of a duck with a simple head and beak, a pointed tail, and a flat bottom (they must have flat bottoms for the

game to work). Air dry the clay overnight or until dry. For a playing cloth, cut a piece of vinyl or brown craft paper in the shape of an animal pelt. Lay the pelt on the floor and have students sit around it.

Game Instructions: The first player shakes the birds in his or her hands and tosses them up gently so they fall on the cloth. Some will land upright; others will fall on their sides. Each upright bird is taken by the player its beak points to. The next player shakes and tosses the remaining birds. Again, the upright birds are claimed by the person they face. The game continues until all the birds have been claimed. The player with the most birds wins.

(Source #5)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Hopkinson is an award-winning author of numerous critically acclaimed picture and chapter books, including *SWEET LAND OF LIBERTY, UNDER THE QUILT OF NIGHT, SHUTTING OUT THE SKY: LIFE IN THE TENEMENTS OF NEW YORK 1880-1924* and *UP BEFORE DAYBREAK: COTTON AND PEOPLE IN AMERICA*. She lives in Oregon. You can visit Deborah Hopkinson's website at www.deborahhopkinson.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Stephen Alcorn has illustrated numerous books for young people, including *YOURS FOR JUSTICE, IDA B. WELLS, LINCOLN: IN HIS OWN WORDS* and *LET IT SHINE: STORIES OF BLACK WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTERS*. He lives in New York. You can visit Stephen Alcorn's website at alcorngallery.com.

HELPFUL WEBSITES:

- 1) matthewhenson.com – This site has a variety of information and activities on Matthew Henson.
- 2) matthewhenson.com/curriculum.htm – To print out a play about Matthew Henson.
- 3) matthewhenson.com/awardmatt.htm – To download a Henson Award Certificate.
- 4) matthewhenson.com/dcpole1.htm – To view maps outlining the expedition to the North Pole.
- 5) thecanadianencyclopedia.com – For information about Ellesmere Island and an article about the effects of global warming on the island.

SOURCES (Internet sites):

- 1) **Inuit People – Facts:** houston-north-gallery.ns.ca/inuit_indians.htm
- 2) **Canadian Inuit or Eskimo Dogs – Facts:** Canadian Eskimo Dog. (12.30.08), Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1.5.09 from www.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Canadian_Eskimo_Dog&oldid=260851847
- 3) **Map of Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada and information:** Knol: a unit of knowledge, by James Marsh. "Ellesmere Island-Nunavut, Canada." 12.21.08, [knol.google.com](http://knol.google.com/k/the-judge/ellesmere-island-nunavut-canada/14g5pj4cyuk5u/944#). <<http://knol.google.com/k/the-judge/ellesmere-island-nunavut-canada/14g5pj4cyuk5u/944#>> 5 January 2009.
- 4) **Map showing Cape Columbia:** Cape Columbia. (12.24.08). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1.5.09, from www.en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Columbia&oldid=259962029
- 5) **Tingmiujang (Inuit Children's Game):** Publications International, Ltd., the Editors of "Snow Games", 10.13.07. HowStuffWorks.com. www.howstuffworks.com/snow-games.htm, 12.30.08.

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Matthew Henson Explorer

