

WRITING STYLE CHOICES 2

'Journal entry'

DIARY VS JOURNAL

Although the terms diary and journal are often used interchangeably, they are not the same genre.

- **A Diary** is often a purely personal and private record, written in a **colloquial** style or even in note form, and often consisting of very short entries.
- **A journal** is likely to be a formal record of a journey or significant experience, sometimes intended for a wider audience and possibly for publication. It is therefore written in full sentences and with some consideration given to style.



Robert Falcon Scott



JOURNAL ENTRY

4. Read the following extracts from the journal of the Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott (who is mentioned in The big chill in Task A2). On 16 January 1912, he discovered that the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had beaten him to the South Pole.

17th Jan: Great God! This is an awful place- and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority Well, it is something to have got here, and the wind may be our friend tomorrow.

18th Jan: Well, we have turned our back now on the goal of our ambition with sore feelings and must face 800 miles of solid dragging - and goodbye to the daydreams!

23rd Jan: I don't like the look of it. Is the weather breaking up? If so God help us, with the tremendous summit journey and scant food.

18th Feb: Pray God we get better travelling as we are not so fit as we were and the season advances space.

5th Mar: God help us, we can't keep up this pulling, that is certain. Among ourselves we are unendingly cheerful, but what each man feels in his heart I can only guess.

24th Mar: It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more.

R. Scott

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List the common characteristics of the style of writing used in journals (also remember the journal extracts in Unit 1, Summary Technique, Sections B and C). They are obviously written in the first person - using I or we - but what can you say about the following:

a tense?

b register?

c vocabulary level?

d sentence length?

e sentence type?

f content?



Imagine you are Captain Bob Bartlett in the passage in Section A. Write three journal entries, with dates, for the winter period of 1913-14, from the freezing of the sea to when you abandon ship.

Use the time grid from Task A5 to help you. Do not simply retell the story - adapt the material. Write about 300 words, in an appropriate style, and refer to the following:

- previous events and original goal of the expedition
- Stefansson's character and behavior
- the mood of the crew and their fears
- how the crew passed the time
- what happened to the *Karluk*
- The journey you are about to face
- your thoughts and feelings about the future.

Reread the following passage, which is a newspaper review of a non-fiction book about a historical Arctic tragedy.

The big chill

Arctic explorers are a breed apart, inevitably drawn, it would seem, by tragedy and the poetry of a 'good end'. Consider Shackleton. Having narrowly survived the loss of his ship, the *Endurance*, when it was crushed by ice in the Weddell Sea, he later died aboard the *Quest*, another Antarctic no-hoper, in 1922. Scott, of course, perished ten years earlier just a few miles from his base camp, having failed by a whisker to be the first to reach the South Pole. Amundsen, who beat his rival by just a couple of days, went on to die in an Arctic air crash.





Good chaps, each and every one of them. But what was it all about? In *The Ice Master*, an appropriately chilling account of the voyage of the *Karluk*, lead-ship of a doomed Arctic expedition in 1913-14, the motivation of those taking part seems to have been foolhardy at best. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, a Canadian of Nordic extraction, was an anthropologist and ethnologist who, for reasons best known to himself, believed that under the Arctic ice there lay a Lost Continent, a kind of wintry Atlantis, the discovery of which would make him famous. In reality, of course, there is no missing landmass; the Arctic Ocean is just what its name implies. But to the impatient Stefansson, the fact that there was, literally, no solid ground for his belief was defeatist talk.

Hiring a steely skipper, Captain Bob Bartlett, Stefansson ordered the Karluk to sea from Victoria in British Columbia on June 17th 1913. Few of his men had real Arctic experience. The 'scientists' on board knew very little of the trials ahead. The ship itself was a retired whaler, made of wood, staggeringly unsuited to its new purpose.

The crew, it transpires, had an eerie premonition of their fate. Stuck fast in the Alaskan floes, they were 'transfixed' by the diaries of George Washington De Long, another of their breed, who had died, along with all his men, in 1881. De Long's ship, the Jeanette, had been crushed by ice in almost exactly the same reach of the Arctic Ocean as the Karluk. One hundred and forty days passed before cold and starvation claimed the last of the expedition's victims.

Jennifer Niven, formerly a screenwriter, assembles her characters with all the skill of an experienced novelist.

Both of the principals are carefully drawn. There is Bartlett, an energetic, skillful mariner, big in every way, with a booming voice and a love for literature and women. Stefansson, by contrast, comes across as an egotist of monstrous proportions. Charming, silver-tongued and handsome, he cared little for those under his command.

Locked together on the diminutive ship, the crew of the Karluk watched and listened in horror as the frozen sea closed in around them. The staff and officers gathered nightly in the saloon for Victrola concerts, choosing from among more than 200 records. As the gloom grew ever deeper, the lure of the library, with its terrible account of the fate of the Jeanette, increased by the day.

Stefansson cracked first. Loading up a dog-sledge, he and several others headed off into the night, ostensibly to hunt for food. Others would go to pieces later. Matters came to a head on January 10th when, with a thunderous roar, the ice broke through the ship's hull, forcing the captain to give the order to abandon ship.

In all, 16 men were to die, but Bartlett emerged as the true hero of the hour. Niven's account - always alive to the nuances of human strength as well as weakness - is at its strongest as she recounts his ghastly journey through the Arctic winter in search of help, and his equally determined quest for his lost crewmen when he at last found sanctuary in Siberia. Those who survived long enough for him to find them numbered a lucky 13, including two Eskimo girls and one of the scientists, McKinlay, who ever after regarded his captain as 'honest, fearless, reliable, loyal, everything a man should be'.

Stefansson, needless to say, survived as well. Having spectacularly betrayed his comrades, he went on to map and discover several Arctic islands. Collecting a medal for his achievements, he made no mention of the *Karluk*, its crew or the men who were lost.

Adapted from an article by Walter Ellis, *The Sunday Times*, 19th November 2000.

TRY
YOUR
BEST

