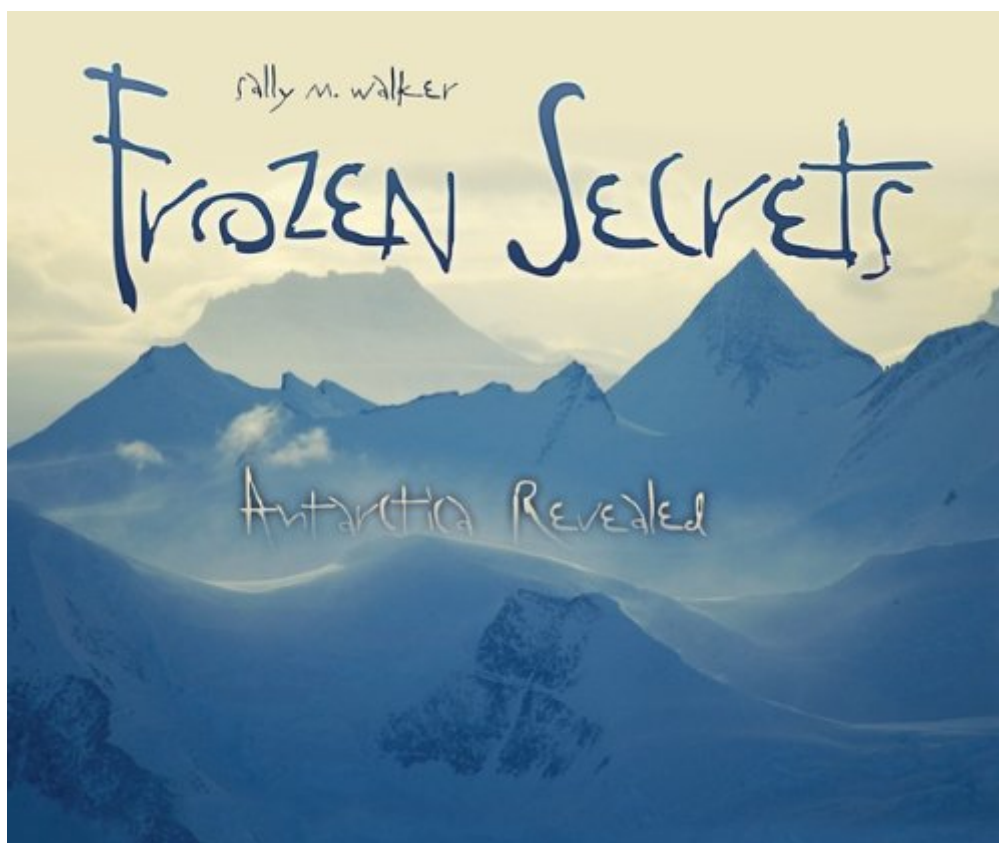


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# Frozen Secrets: Antarctica Revealed (Nonfiction - Grades 4-8)



## Synopsis

Studying Antarctica has never been for the fainthearted."Hereabouts died a very gallant gentleman, Captain L. E. G. Oates of the Inniskilling Dragoons. In March 1912, returning from the Pole, he walked willingly to his death in a blizzard to try to save his comrades, beset by hardship."• Inscription on a cross placed near presumed final resting place of Antarctic explorer Lawrence • "Titus • Oates, The Terra Nova Expedition, 1910-1913"• "We have one survival bag for every two people."• Antarctic paleontologist William Hammer, Transantarctic Vertebrate Paleontology Project, 2004 • "When the ice cracks, it can sound like massive thunder rolls that seem to go on forever. If it is a serious cracking in the ice, it literally sounds like canon shots."• • Eighth-grade science teacher and Antarctic diver Robin Ellwood, Lake Ecosystems in Antarctica Project, 2008-2009• "Humanity's fascination with the land at the bottom of the globe dates back at least to the ancient Romans, who imagined Terra Australis Incognita • the "unknown southern land" • and drew it on their maps even though no one had ever seen it. It took a thousand years for this unknown land to become known. Despite the many people who have since visited it, conquering the Antarctic frontier is a never-ending challenge that calls scientists and explorers to risk their lives in the pursuit of knowledge. Frozen Secrets is the tale of a continent, the inside story of the critical, cutting-edge research that brave men and women from around the world have done and still do in Antarctica. Sally M. Walker traces expeditions from the earliest explorers to today's research stations, where contemporary scientists work in some of the harshest conditions on Earth. Whether they study the formation of polar ice or the stratigraphy of ancient rock or the fossils of newly discovered dinosaurs or the chemistry of air trapped in miniscule frozen bubbles, the scientists working in Antarctica are building a body of knowledge that will influence future generations as they make choices that could affect the course of the whole planet.

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## **Customer Reviews**

Frozen Secrets is a bit of a style over substance book. It is lavishly illustrated, some might even say overproduced. I would have appreciated a more readable book and wish more time/money were spent on travel and original photography than design/print production! Thankfully, this book is jam packed with an organized hodgepodge of illustrated geologic and scientific information about Antarctica and the research taking place there. Much of it is informative and interesting, focusing on the science and geography of the area. My biggest disappointment was discovering on pg 98 that author Sally M. Walker hasn't been to Antarctica. That is the biggest shame of this book, because she is a good writer! Time, effort, and budget should have been made for her to at least take a tourist's cruise trip to the continent. It would have been even better if she'd been able to do an author's stay ashore. I bet the research would have been more thorough and better presented if she'd actually been able to make the trip? Perhaps then some of the problems remarked on above would evaporate as her own first-hand knowledge, photos, and experiences could have given this book more substance and authenticity. It is difficult to tell how current some of the photos are and whether they truly document the way research is conducted in Antarctica today. I wish the many photographic illustrations were captioned and dated. The ambiguity of the photo illustrations gives the book a strange feel, like stock photos that may or may not be relevant were used for eye candy, that the photographic illustrations may or many not be depicting the same time period/research effort as the surrounding text describes. Another shortcoming is that American research on the continent is presented nearly exclusively. The reader is left with the bizarre impression that what the Americans are doing there is important and that other people did stuff there a long time ago (and might be doing stuff there now too) but that it isn't important/current like the American work. This

myopic bias makes it impossible for the reader to know or appreciate how many other countries are also conducting research on Antarctica, what the focus of their research is, and whether/how it differs from the American research efforts.

We don't have enough books like this. Walker's lucid prose is used to excellent effect in *FROZEN SECRETS: ANTARCTICA REVEALED*, a mix of geology, physics, paleobiology, engineering and history. Children's science writing has an extreme bias toward biology (I am guilty of this, too). We do a half-decent job with space science and geology (thank you, astronauts and volcanoes!) but where are all the engineering books? Is there any area with such a yawning gap between importance to society and what we have to offer our children on the subject? At least now we have *FROZEN SECRETS*. Walker does a wonderful job of showing engineers applying their skills in this most forbidding of environments. One of my favorite bits concerns junior high school students constructing an underwater robot for use in Antarctica. This book is intelligent, thorough, well-designed, and engaging. I feel smarter after having read *FROZEN SECRETS*, and I wish there were more books like it to put into kids' hands.

This book has many great features including the following: Great organization: the book is easy to follow with a logical beginning with the race to the South Pole and the first discoveries to the implications of global warming in Antarctica and the possible repercussions world wide. Great maps, as the author discusses various different expeditions and scientific studies going on across the continent, the maps help the reader visualize the different locations. (I like being able to put places and locations together.) Great design: the design is attractive and appealing. Awesome photographs that give the reader a glimpse into a harsh, but fascinating place and the price paid by those who choose to study there. The amount of text and technical nature of the writing make this book most suitable for secondary students, although I plan to use some of the photographs to help my elementary students develop a better appreciation for our planet's often ignored seventh continent.

This book is written for older grades, packed with text and beautiful photographs (although not necessarily RECENT photographs). It says too much without teaching enough. It's almost a trivia dump... I don't know how to explain it best. The information is not very well organized. (Much like this review, I'm sorry to say.) The information on the plant and animal fossils being found on Antarctica is quite interesting. The information on ice cores and soil cores is well presented and

illustrated. This was the best part of the book. I was interested to read that ice cores show Earth to be a planet with a stable cooling-warming pattern over the past 800,000 years. In 2012, we are in the warming part of the cycle. That is good information. If you have a child who is interested in the jobs scientists do, this is a good choice. For that specific kind of kid, I would also recommend: *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland* (Exceptional Social Studies Titles [Library Binding]) *How the Dinosaur Got to the Museum* (picture book)

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