



Arctic Explorer

Classroom Guide

In the coldest, emptiest place, the most extraordinary things are waiting

CASEL Competency: Self-Management

Grade Level: Pre-K–2

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Category: Adventure

Learning Objectives

- Discover that what looks empty (the arctic) is full of hidden life
 - Learn to trust a guide — the arctic fox who leads the way
 - Understand that harsh environments build resilience and reveal beauty (aurora borealis)
 - Practice perseverance — keep going even when the path is cold and hard
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Overview & Preparation

Key Vocabulary

Arctic • Explorer • Tundra • Aurora • Fox • Glacier • Resilience • Footprint • Ice cave • Snowstorm

Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- White and blue paper
- Cotton balls and glitter
- Crayons (white, blue, silver, green)
- Optional: ice cubes for sensory exploration

Before Reading

Connection Question

Have you ever been somewhere that looked empty but turned out to be full of surprises?

Background Building

The Arctic looks like nothing — just white, flat, cold. But in this story, the hero bundles up and steps into that vast white world, where an arctic fox appears and leads the way. Together they discover ice caves glowing blue from the inside, a seal colony on sun-warmed rocks, and finally, the aurora borealis dancing across the sky. The lesson: what looks empty is often full of wonder. You just have to keep going.

During Reading — Pause Points

- **When the arctic fox appears and starts leading the way** — A fox appeared! It seems to know where to go. Have you ever had someone (or something) guide you when you didn't know the way?
- **When the hero enters the ice cave glowing blue** — An ice cave — blue and glowing from the inside! This was hidden under the snow. What else might be hiding in "empty" places?
- **When the aurora borealis fills the sky** — GREEN and PURPLE dancing in the sky! This only happens in the coldest places. What does that tell us about what you find when you push through the hard part?

Discussion Questions

1. The Arctic looked empty at first. What did the hero find by keeping going?

↳ Have you ever felt like giving up and then found something wonderful right after?

2. The arctic fox was a guide. Who or what guides YOU when you're in unfamiliar territory?

↳ Why is it helpful to follow someone who knows the way?

3. The aurora borealis only appears in the coldest places. What beautiful things only come from hard experiences?

↳ Can you think of something you learned from a difficult time?

4. The hero left footprints in the snow — the first ones. What does it mean to be the first person to explore something?

↳ What would you like to be the first to discover?

Facilitation Tips

Use white art materials on white paper — it looks "empty" until you add light or look from an angle. This mirrors the story's lesson: what looks like nothing may be full of hidden beauty.

Emotional Payoff

The vast empty white transforms into a world of hidden wonder: blue ice caves, playful seals, and a sky full of dancing light. The hero learns that the coldest, hardest paths lead to the most extraordinary rewards — and that trusting a guide makes the journey possible.

After Reading Activities

White on White Art

Duration: 15 min | Materials: White paper, white crayon, watercolor wash

Draw with white crayon on white paper — it looks invisible! Then paint a watercolor wash over it — the hidden picture appears. Just like the Arctic: what seems empty is full of hidden art. Discuss: what was always there that we couldn't see?

Aurora Borealis Painting

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Black paper, chalk pastels or neon crayons

Create aurora borealis art: swirl green, purple, blue, and pink across black paper. Blend with fingers. These lights only appear in the coldest, darkest skies. Discuss: sometimes the most beautiful things show up in the hardest moments.

Follow the Guide Game

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Blindfold (optional), open space

Pairs: one child is the "explorer" (eyes closed or looking down), one is the "arctic fox guide." The guide leads the explorer safely around the room using only gentle taps or whispered directions. Switch roles. Discuss: how did it feel to trust someone else to lead?

Writing Prompts

- Draw the ice cave from the inside. What color is the light? What does it feel like to be inside something frozen but beautiful?
- Write a diary entry from your arctic expedition. What surprised you the most?
- If the aurora borealis could talk, what would it say to you?

Home Connection

Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "Arctic Explorer," about discovering that the coldest, emptiest-looking places hold extraordinary hidden wonders — glowing ice caves, playful seals, and the aurora borealis dancing across the sky. Your child learned that perseverance and trusting a guide reveal what looks like nothing into something spectacular.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Try the white-crayon-then-watercolor trick together — discover what's hidden!
- Look up photos or videos of the aurora borealis and talk about what it would feel like to see it
- Go on a "hidden beauty" walk: find something that looks ordinary but is secretly beautiful when you look closely

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

Related Books

- The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats
- Over and Under the Snow by Kate Messner
- The Polar Bear by Jenni Desmond
- Way Up in the Arctic by Jennifer Ward